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# CHRISTIAN FAITH,

COMPREHENSIVE, NOT PARTIAL;

DEFINITE, NOT UNCERTAIN:

# EIGHT SERMONS,

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN THE YEAR M.DCCC.LVII.

AT THE LECTURE FOUNDED BY

THE LATE REV. JOHN BAMPTON, M.A.

CANON OF SALISBURY.

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BY

WILLIAM EDWARD JELF, B.D.

Late Censor of Christ Church, and sometime Whitehall Preacher.

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OXFORD:

PRINTED BY J. WRIGHT, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY,

SOLD BY J. H. & JAS. PARKER, OXFORD,
AND 377 STRAND, LONDON.

M.DCCC.LVII.

# EXTRACT

FROM

## THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF THE

## REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY.

—— "I give and bequeath my Lands and Estates to "the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the University "of Oxford for ever, to have and to hold all and sin- "gular the said Lands or Estates upon trust, and to the "intents and purposes hereinafter mentioned; that is to "say, I will and appoint that the Vice-Chancellor of the "University of Oxford for the time being shall take and "receive all the rents, issues, and profits thereof, and "(after all taxes, reparations, and necessary deductions "made) that he pay all the remainder to the endowment "of eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be established for "ever in the said University, and to be performed in the "manner following:

"I direct and appoint, that, upon the first Tuesday in "Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly chosen by the Heads "of Colleges only, and by no others, in the room ad- "joining to the Printing-House, between the hours of ten "in the morning and two in the afternoon, to preach "eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, the year following, at "St. Mary's in Oxford, between the commencement of the

"last month in Lent Term, and the end of the third week "in Act Term.

"Also I direct and appoint, that the eight Divinity "Lecture Sermons shall be preached upon either of the "following Subjects—to confirm and establish the Christ- "ian Faith, and to confute all heretics and schismatics "—upon the divine authority of the holy Scriptures— "upon the authority of the writings of the primitive Fa- "thers, as to the faith and practice of the primitive Church "—upon the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus "Christ—upon the Divinity of the Holy Ghost—upon the "Articles of the Christian Faith, as comprehended in the "Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

"Also I direct, that thirty copies of the eight Divinity "Lecture Sermons shall be always printed, within two "months after they are preached, and one copy shall be "given to the Chancellor of the University, and one copy "to the Head of every College, and one copy to the Mayor "of the city of Oxford, and one copy to be put into the "Bodleian Library; and the expense of printing them shall "be paid out of the revenue of the Land or Estates given "for establishing the Divinity Lecture Sermons; and the "Preacher shall not be paid, nor be entitled to the revenue, "before they are printed.

"Also I direct and appoint, that no person shall be "qualified to preach the Divinity Lecture Sermons, un- "less he hath taken the degree of Master of Arts at least, "in one of the two Universities of Oxford or Cambridge; "and that the same person shall never preach the Divinity "Lecture Sermons twice."

# PREFACE.

I AM well aware that the following pages leave untouched many points which are necessary to a full exposition of the idea on which my Lectures are founded. In a subject, which practically includes the whole of theology, time and space forbade my following it out to its extreme limits, or going into all the details; I was therefore obliged to content myself with taking the more salient points, and those which promised to afford most opportunities for the illustration and application of the principle with reference to the theological questions of the day — and even in these prominent points I have found myself compelled to pass by much which properly belongs to their full consideration. As some of these points are treated of at length in my published volume of Whitehall

Sermons, I hope I may be held excused for occasionally referring to what I have there said on the possibility and impossibility of pardon — the value and worthlessness of good works—sins of infirmity and sins deadly —confession and absolution—times of fasting, &c.

I had intended to follow the example of my predecessors in adding an appendix: but as I find it impossible to do justice to so wide a subject in the time specified in the founder's will for sending round copies to those who are entitled to them, I think it best to publish the Lectures alone; should it seem desirable that what I have advanced should be supported by quotations, or further illustrations or arguments, I may at any time put forth an Appendix as a separate volume.

*Caerleon, Aug.* 3, 1857.

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ERRATA.

Page 1, in the text of the first Lecture *for* "that I came" *read* "that I am come"

47, l. 13, *for* "attribute" *read* "attributes"

59, l. 24, *for* "literal sense" *read* "literal a sense"

149, l. 20, *for* "Judge." *read* "Judge?"

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# LECTURE I.

MATT. x. 34.

*Think not that I came to send peace on the earth ;*
*I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

IT would perhaps be difficult to find a stronger proof of the evil in man, than the way in which Christianity has been rejected or misused. Could any ancient philosopher have guessed at the nature and circumstances of the Gospel revelation ; could he have known that it would come in the power of signs and wonders bearing witness to its divine original, he would have augured for it universal acceptance : had he known that it would disclose those secrets of the moral and spiritual world which had so long excited and baffled the curiosity of man; that it would show us the Divine Being in his attributes, counsels, and will, he would have supposed that men would contemplate rather than speculate upon it : had he known that it would solve doubts and assure hopes, that it would reveal the highest motives, aims, destinies, consolations for this life, and bring with it the sure promise of another, he would have looked forward to its becoming the un-

disputed guide of action: had he known that with these revelations and these sanctions it would set forth universal love as the practical rule of action, he surely would have prophesied for it a reign of triumphant peace and happiness; he would have sighed for this more than golden age, which was to come over the world by the will and in the power of the Lord of heaven and earth: and of course all these anticipations would have been more certain had he known the Jewish scriptures, or had he listened with the shepherds to the tidings of great joy, peace, good-will towards men.

How little however can we trust to any anticipations which are based on man's goodness or wisdom! As we look back on the history of the Christian world, that history will be but a sad and awful commentary on the prophetic words of my text. Nearly two thousand years have passed since those words were spoken, and it is scarcely too much to say, that every one of those years has in its private or public records furnished an illustration of their meaning. Not however that we are to suppose that our Saviour is setting forth the will or aim of God in sending Him upon earth; He is but foreshadowing the workings of Satan's malice and human perversity; the discords introduced by man into the harmonious counsels of God. Isaiah's prophetic images of perfect peace, repeated as they are in the angels' song, show to us the proper and final, as the words of my text give us the actual and present results of the coming of the kingdom of God.

It was indeed to be expected that Christianity

should rouse against itself the fierce and cruel enmity of the powers and religions it came to overthrow; and our Saviour's warning may be considered to have had its first accomplishment in the trials which waited on the early profession of the faith; but even when heathen darkness had yielded to Divine light, even then peace seems to have resulted as little from the triumphant as it had from the persecuted state of the Church. Christians indeed had no longer to fear the frowns or the fancies of the masters of the world, to cower before the enmity of a dominant religion struggling for its very existence; the Church stood erect not only in the sight of God, but in the sight of man; her warfare with the external world was over; and then Christian rose against Christian with fire and sword; a man's foes were of his own household of faith. In the very vineyard of the Lord, where the seed of peace and love was sown, there sprung forth armed men; the very name which lulled the wind and smoothed the sea, roused passions more unruly than the storm, more merciless than the waves; the very name before which death had loosed his grasp, was made the death warrant of thousands of Christians, not, as formerly, by those who persecuted the disciples, but by those who gloried in calling themselves the soldiers of the Cross. It was under this sacred banner, and in His all-holy Name, that Christian countries laid waste, Christian cities sacked, Christian populations massacred, bore witness to the meaning of the words, *I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

And though actual persecution to death or bonds

has now for the most part passed away before the milder spirit of the age, yet even in these days it cannot be denied that the Gospel brings war rather than peace. In many parts of the world religion is standing with sword and shield in the attitude of attack or defence; it is still the cause, open or secret, why nation is set against nation. In our country it is, alas! no small element of the differences which paralyse our energies as a church and nation; while in private life there are probably very few who cannot point to a family where religious views have severed the ties of friendship or of blood.

Nor is it difficult to trace this state of things to the natural tendencies of fallen man; it has ever been an instinct of human pride, an ambition of human reason, to grapple with and subdue ideas which elude its grasp and defy its power; to arrange and combine the various images reflected on its broken surface, to solve difficulties, to unravel secrets, to penetrate mysteries, so that the whole universe, visible and invisible, should seem to bow its head before the master powers of the human mind. And closely connected with this mental activity thus striving towards mental supremacy, is a mental indolence which anticipates the time of rest and satisfaction, and tries to grasp the victory before it is won; and hence arises a yearning after system and simplicity, which though properly a handmaid of truth, yet in many cases rather betrays than furthers it. The curious mind, weary of grappling with difficulties without conquering them, impatient of feeling itself baffled, oftentimes takes refuge in a

solution which is only such so far as it presents an harmonious and consistent whole, whose simplicity, by ignoring difficulties, gives to the mind an apparent victory over them; reducing by force, as it were, the various phenomena to some one principle or cause, it is content with the shadow of knowledge instead of its reality; for surely that knowledge is only a shadow, and a pretence, which, instead of embodying and representing the true nature and relations of things, is satisfied if all does but seem to hang together, though the similitudes are forced and the connection unreal; which instead of confessing its ignorance of some things, is content if it can but seem to be master of all, though the very formulæ and dogmas which it uses are but thinly veiled expressions of ignorance. The result of such a course in physical inquiries would be easily recognised as error, for nature herself, ever before the eyes of those who search into her, bears witness against this pretended philosophy which thus sacrifices truth to harmony; and hence in physical science, theory after theory, system after system, passed away with the mind that created or the age that accepted it.

Much more fatal are the effects which this love of system and theory worked upon theology: for here, the subject-matter being without the province of sense, the mind was free to combine, reject, arrange, create as it pleased, without its operations being subjected to the test of facts or of experience; every man was, humanly speaking, free to systematise for himself; and thus the various attempts to introduce

simplicity and harmony did but produce the confusions and contradictions of a variety of opposing theories. And by this same love of system most of the heresies which sprung from the peculiar turn of mind, or the accidental direction given to individual thought and study, were developed in a way which their authors at first but little dreamed of. Some one text or doctrine[a], true in itself, attracted the reason or the feelings, and thus became unconsciously the centre round which all other views and doctrines were to group themselves; such as did not readily harmonise with it were straightway struck out or explained away; the one doctrine thus taken out of its proper position and relation was added to or curtailed, as seemed necessary to work out its due proportion and completeness as a system. Hence again some doctrines were lost sight of, some moulded afresh; and then men, naturally jealous of the honour of the idol they had thus carved, were persuaded that it alone presented the image of Divine truth, and that whoever would be saved must straightway fall down and worship it; while, on the other hand, those who opposed these perversions of the gospel were led by their antagonism to exaggerate the opposite[b], to set forth, explain, define, arrange, deduce, so as in their turn to introduce the

[a] Hieron. vol. iv. page 991. (ed. Ben. Ver. 1735.) "*Omnis enim hæreticus nascitur in Ecclesia.*" Jewell, vol. iii. p. 82. ed. Ox. 1848, "*Neither ever was any heresy so gross, but was able to make some show of God's word.*"

[b] Cf. Aug. De Grat. vol. x. page 473. A. ed. Bened. Antw. 1700.—Bacon on Church Controversies, vol. 2. p. 510. Lond. 1819. See Appendix.

gravest errors, and to lose the most necessary truths. The theological history of the Church is made up of the disputes stirred up by those who, taking one truth and neglecting others, framed a religion of their own, or who were driven by one error into the opposite extreme. And then was the Church compelled in self-defence to set forth and state more closely and briefly many points of Catholic doctrine, which had hitherto been embodied as living principles in the souls of the faithful, rather than in any formal definition of the faith; and though we have great reason to thank God that He has in our Creeds preserved to us those truths which were thus imperilled, yet sad it is to see Christian faith, instead of the manifold play of infinite truth, assume the stern fixed features of a system of philosophy. The stone which came down from heaven to fill the whole earth, needed not to be carved or hewn into human shape by man. To those indeed who look on our religion with the eye of the flesh, it might seem to be wanting in form or comeliness, but those who gaze on it with the reverential eye of faith can see in it features and proportions far exceeding any beauty or perfection which the powers of man could possibly confer upon it.

And when Divine truth was thus as it were split into fragments, each with its own champions and worshippers, it was but matter of course that each separate system daily became more rigid and exclusive; new points of separation arose, new parties were formed, the barriers between those

already existing daily became more impassable, till Christendom, which should have been the land of peace and promise, sending forth warriors well trained for the spiritual armies of God, became the battle field of the fiercest and angriest passions of man; wherein by tongue and pen, and even by fire and sword, Christians sought the destruction of Christians, each party denouncing and persecuting the other in this world; and as for the next, shutting out, in will and wish at least, all those who held the slightest variation from their favourite dogma, or who had not the pass-words of the system. If the anathemas which resounded from the various parts of Christendom were to be believed, truth had passed away from the earth; each condemned each, and was in his turn condemned by the rest. Time went on; nations rose and fell; circumstances restored to Rome her position among the nations of the west as the centre of civilisation and power; and the bishops of her see by a skilful adaptation of her arts, her politics, her religion to the weaknesses and ambitions, the prejudices or the designs of the rude yet energetic men who were brought within her influence, contrived to throw such a charm over their spirits that all other voices but her own were well nigh hushed; and well indeed would it have been for Christendom if in that high position she had been true to the faith once delivered to the saints—if her voice, as it went out to all corners of the globe, had been content to preach the gospel of St. Paul and St. Peter, without seeking to found dominion on her Divine mission: if she had held her faith in the power of God's word to

establish His kingdom, without adding decrees and doctrines of her own to keep minds in subjection to her principle of unity. For a time there was the semblance of peace; it was but seldom that the rude breath of polemics ruffled the church's surface; but this, alas! this was but a sign of the deep stagnation of the waters of spiritual life, the lack of the breath of the Spirit; and then Rome went further and further from her first love; human aims and passions, having been admitted as her servants, quickly became her masters, and she was alternately the slave and the mistress, the tool and the guide of the powers of the world. Faith, in the scriptural sense of the word, was in most parts dead, and in its place rose up a spirit of chivalry and self-devotion which in its highest energies went forth as an armed warrior with all the pomp and circumstance of war, to win lands, cities, and kingdoms from the infidel, instead of the hearts of men from Satan, or perhaps now and then to crush the miserable, nay, rather happy, few, who refused to bow the knee to Rome, and chose rather to suffer with Christ than to live with her; but these were lost in the vastness of her empire, and, as far as Christendom itself went, peace seemed at least to have taken the place of the sword. It was however but for a time, and in seeming: Rome waxed worse and worse; her principles of thought and action, her policy, private and public, became more and more exclusively and confessedly carnal and selfish, till in good truth the spirit which was in her seemed to be rather that of

the powers of the prince of this world, than of God; obliged from time to time to contrive new superstitions, perversions, or negations of the pure gospel, in order to supply her needs and to prop up the fabric of universal dominion, which she called unity, she at length, by the blessing of God, wore out the patience of men. The charm was broken; the river which had been so long pent up from its natural course burst the barriers, and instead of flowing in one deep broad stream, broke into a thousand channels. The sword again left the sheath; Christendom, once more alive, began to think and act for itself; but its eyes were dim, and its step uncertain, as of men awaking out of a deathlike sleep. Where men's minds were weak, Rome managed to retain or to regain them: while where there was more activity and independence, there more or less of primitive freedom was recovered; but this was mostly the rebellion of human reason against usurped authority, and mostly therefore, as being merely human, produced the natural results: men of powerful mind and hasty judgment framed for themselves and for others systems of theology, taking as their basis that interpretation of Scripture which was most opposed to that particular point which they most disliked in Rome; and thus arose new elements of separation, new war cries of discord in the Christian world: in our own country especially, which by that time had become a centre of thought and action, men were and are so accustomed to think and act for themselves, that from that time to the present fresh parties and sects have

been continually springing into being, each and all claiming to take their stand on scriptural truth, and pretending to teach men exclusively the way of salvation; and this not only without, but even within the very Church of God.

It is true that Christianity has proved itself to have a principle of vitality above and independent of human will or human cooperation, inasmuch as in spite of being thus, humanly speaking, divided against itself, it has stood and still stands among mankind, a power mighty to save; but it need not be said how contrary these divisions are to the interests of our Church, and the glory of God, and the work of Christ and his Spirit; how much they hinder the salvation of those who are thus lacking in Christian love—nay, more, it is enough to call forth a sigh even in the careless heart which looks only to its effects on us as a nation.

I am aware that some persons acquiesce in this state of religious variance as almost a necessary condition of the Church militant on earth; something which, though on the whole to be regretted, is no wise contrary to the nature of Christianity. I must say that I can see in the Bible no trace of the notion that difference in religious matters is to be the proper and normal condition of different churches or of different individuals in the same church. It is true that there may, nay, must be, different ways of setting forth or receiving the same truth, arising from national or individual temperament or circumstances, as there must be different forms of expression for truth arising from difference of language;

but these are not of the essence, but the accidents of the truth. In such cases there is no difference as to the truth itself; but where there is such difference, it seems to be a sign that the Spirit of love and knowledge is in some way or other lacking; for where that Spirit is, it will lead into all truth, and therefore necessarily to the same truth; where that Spirit is, there may be diversities of language, of race, of ministrations, of customs, but there will be identity of thought in religious matters; identity of feeling; identity of hope; identity of faith; the same idea of God; the same view of Christ; the same belief in the Holy Ghost; the same view of the position, the destinies, the duties, in short, of the whole spiritual life of Christian men. It is true, perhaps, that as things are at present we can practically realise no higher form of Christian unity than by suspending all bitterness of feeling and speaking towards those with whom we differ, and by feeling and acting with them, where we can do so without compromising or imperilling what we believe to be God's truth. It seems as if this might be the way of leading others, and perhaps of ourselves being led to Christian truth, and thus of reestablishing Christian unity; but surely this does not interfere with the duty which lies upon every man according to his ability and opportunity of contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and striving to bring about the consummation of religious peace by unity of religious thought. Surely Christian unity is something more than a mere conventional truce, a mere suspension of hostilities. We do not find it thus

figured in the Bible; we do not there find Christian at war with Christian, and merely resting on their arms in weariness, or it may be in pity and sympathy for each other, but we find them side by side in the unity of the Spirit, prepared to do battle with the enemies of God and man; we find that Christians are to be one, even as the Father and the Son are one, are all to be of one mind, all think the same thing. Divisions, indeed, and heresies are spoken of as necessary, but it was in order that the wheat might be sifted from the chaff; those, who having not the spirit of truth went out from the body, were not to be embraced, or admitted to the Christian brotherhood; for the simple fact of essential division, of essential difference of view in religious matters, destroyed that complete sympathy of faith and unity of feeling on which the brotherhood was founded. Those were glorious and happy times when the faithful, though outlaws from civilized life, though hunted like beasts from city to city and desert to desert, knew themselves nevertheless to be bound together by stronger ties than those of country or race. What a contrast to the modern so-called unity, when even those who are sprung from the same race, living in the same country, and under the same laws, and speaking the same language, can find no higher idea of Christian harmony than that they should agree to differ. I am not saying that it would be wise or right to lay aside even this shadow of unity, but that we ought not to acquiesce in it as our highest and best, but ought

always to be praying and striving towards something higher and better. It is something to the storm-tost ship that the jealousies and enmities of the crew should not break out into open tumult; but it is not this which will trim the sails to the breeze, or guide her prosperously on her way. It would be something for the Church if hostile thoughts, angry words, bitter sneers, unfair misrepresentations should be still; but this is not all which is needed, if we are, by the help of God and the breath of the Spirit, to bring the ark of God and the souls of men safe through the waves of this troublesome world.

Nor can I think that the full or real idea of unity has been grasped or developed by the attempts of modern times to base it on a common profession of Christianity, as a religion, without caring for agreement in the particulars of which, in fact, Christianity is made up: not merely, as in the former case, by agreeing to differ, but by assigning to every opinion equal and independent possession of truth. It is not to be wondered at indeed if, amid the strife of conflicting systems, men of warm hearts and earnest love for their fellows have waxed impatient of the way in which the various sects excluded each other from communion, and arrogated the sure mercies of Christ only to those who adopted their own theological views and language. It is no wonder that such men have sought to devise a remedy; some by maintaining that the holding of any portion of gospel truth is a sufficient embracing of Christ's revelation, even though great and primitive and essential doctrines

are rejected; so that no one of the religious parties represents Christianity more or less than another: that the Bible sets forth the Gospel in a variety of aspects, any one of which may be chosen with equal assurance: some by declaring the revelation itself to be so obscure, that it is impossible to distinguish accurately truth from falsehood, or to say that any man is wrong who believes what he thinks he finds therein. It seems to me that each of these views is so far right that it starts from existing facts; the one recognising in the several systems the presence of that truth on which they are respectively founded; the other implying that there are many difficulties and perplexities in Scripture before which human reason must bow its head. But I confess that in the deductions they draw and the principles they evolve, it appears to me that the one does away with the completeness and mars the proportions of the Christian Faith; while the other destroys its certainty, making it a mere matter of human opinion, in which either of two opposites is as likely to be faith as the other.

It will be my endeavour in the following Lectures to exhibit what seems to me a more complete view of truth, a more sure ground of unity, by setting forth *Christian Faith*, I. *as comprehensive, not partial;* II. *definite, not uncertain.* By showing that it comprehends, in their positive teaching and doctrines at least, most, if not all, of the various opinions which have divided Christendom; that it places before the human mind no ill-defined rays of truth which

are essentially to vary with the focus through which they are viewed, but the very pure and perfect light of God Himself unchangeable and unchanged; that the notes which the Bible sounds, however broken by the noisy strifes of men, are not uncertain or wavering, but the very voice of God Himself speaking clearly and distinctly to those who have ears and hearts to hear.

I. The first principle I would maintain and illustrate is, that *faith is comprehensive*, that it has breadth as well as depth; that with reference to the Bible, it receives all the doctrines in the revealed scheme of salvation without altering or doing violence to them: that with reference to the various religious opinions, it embraces all, without excluding any, which are founded on Scripture or natural religion, and not on the will or fancy of men. I do not mean by this, what perhaps some would mean, that it embraces each as by itself truth, each separately and by itself a sufficient and complete faith; but that each is an element of the whole truth, and contributes something to the full measure of faith; that the different doctrines, which in their separate or exaggerated form divide the religious world, may be, and are, with exceptions and modifications, true together, when reduced to their due proportions; that real faith combines into one whole, and in their proper proportions, each of the truths which form the centre, or rather the whole, of this or that theological system; and in doing this, I am but applying to Theology what I believe to be a true principle of philosophy in general: that where men

of talents, learning, patience, honesty deduce from the same data different views, and support them by fair argument and proof, there must be something at least of truth in each—something in each which is wanting to complete the rest.

I hold it then to be no real objection to a doctrine held by others, that it presents to us a view of the Divine will, or of human nature in relation to that will, different from what we ourselves may rightly have accepted as a fundamental truth of real religion. The point we have to consider is, whether it is in Scripture as read by the primitive Church[b] or not. If it is, then we may not so expound one text of Scripture as to obscure or ignore the truth laid down in another; and this holds good not only where the two doctrines may, on further inspection, be reconciled with each other, as being merely different phases or degrees of the same spiritual fact or state, or applicable to different circumstances, or in different senses, where they may be logically true together, but even where, according to our finite conception, there is an actual contradiction between them; such as Predestination and Free Will, or Trinity in Unity.

Still less, of course, is one doctrine overthrown by its contradictory when the opposition is not between Scripture and Scripture, but between Scripture and a dogma which is built on our abstract conceptions

[b] Scripture as the sole Revelation. The primitive Church as the best, because the safest, interpreter thereof. See Dr. Hook's Sermon on 1 Cor. xi. 16.

of the Divine nature and attributes, such as the notion that what is in Scripture termed everlasting punishment cannot be everlasting, because it is supposed to be contrary to the mercy of God; or that our Saviour's death could not be a sacrifice, because it would be contrary to our notions of God's moral nature. Apart from revelation, man, fallen in feelings and reason, can form no real conception of God's nature or attributes: His ways are not as our ways, they are unsearchable and past finding out; and yet men talk and argue as if they knew them as perfectly and surely as they do the motions of our own moral being. Actually, too, in the world we find contradictions to our dim views of perfect goodness (such, for instance, as the permission of evil and pain,) all which we know to exist; and in the history of His dealings with His own people, there are surely things which to superficial observers are hard to reconcile with human notions of a perfect being. To faith, indeed, there are no such difficulties. Faith knows that whatever God does must be good and just; faith knows that we are to form our ideas of God from what He tells us of Himself, not to interpret what He is pleased to tell us by our abstract views of Him.

The principle however which I have advanced requires some limitations: first of all, it does not apply, if one of the opposing doctrines is not in Scripture: where it is merely an human addition, whether in the practice of a church or the writings of an individual, to fill up a mere humanly devised

system, there of course the direct revelation of Scripture is not coordinately true with it, but bears direct evidence against it. The so called religious impressions of a crazed fancy or ambition, such as that of Montanus, or of several impostors in modern times; additions to the faith on merely human grounds and by human authority, such as the mass of Romish corruptions; the blank void of the deist—all these and such as these are excluded from the principle of comprehension which I am advocating. They are each in their degree direct negations of Divine truths, not exaggerations or perversions of them. Thus the Romish dogma of a plurality of mediators in the persons of the Virgin and Saints is directly overthrown by the text, *There is but one Mediator between God and men.* If, indeed, the mediation of others besides our Saviour had been revealed in Scripture, then the principle I have laid down would require us to receive as true, though in some way above our comprehension, both the single mediation of Christ, and nevertheless the mediation of the Saints; but one is in the Bible, and the other is not. It is not that any two contradictory propositions in theology are necessarily true together, but that when any such are both revealed, then both are to be received as coordinate parts of God's counsels.

Nor, again, is the principle available in such things as are within the direct cognizance of our senses[c], in matters of fact, past or present. The

[c] Tertullian de Anima, c. 17. "*Non licet nobis in dubium sensus istos revocare.*"

same reasoning does not apply to things finite and things infinite. Things infinite may not be tested by our experience or by our notions of their possibility either in themselves or relatively to some other established truth, for the simple reason that our faculties cannot judge of what lies in so different a sphere. Possibility and impossibility are, in fact, mere human conceptions and expressions for the relations, positive and negative, between finite things, and therefore do not obtain in things infinite; but where these notions do legitimately come in, where the two really opposing doctrines relate to what is directly in the sphere of our senses, then it is clear that both are not true together, though Scripture may apparently be adduced in support of each. It is, for instance, no answer to the texts which speak of the consecrated elements as bread and wine, to urge that the contrary doctrine, that they are actually flesh and blood, may yet, on the principle laid down above, be true; for the question is not one of the coordinate truth of two Scripture statements on matters beyond our cognizance, but of two conflicting facts on a matter directly within the sphere of our senses, the opposites of which cannot both be set forth in Scripture. And this is decided by the universal perception of the fact[d], that to the sight, touch, taste, the bread does remain bread, and the wine does remain wine; whence we see that the meaning

[d] See Jeremy Taylor "on the Presence of Christ in the Holy Sacrament," vol. x. 9 sqq. (ed. Heber. 1837.) See also Jewell, vol. iii. p. 84.

which the Romanist puts on the one text is not really the sense of Scripture, and therefore cannot be quoted as such against the other.

II. The second point I shall endeavour to establish is of no less consequence than the former, viz. that *Christian faith is definite:* that the truths and doctrines of which it is composed are clear and certain; many of them indeed above our comprehension as to the mode, but still within our apprehension as to the fact of their reality. And this second point is for the most part a corollary of the first, for the notion of the indefiniteness of Scripture has arisen very much from losing sight of its comprehensiveness. Each truth is definite and clear enough of itself; the indefiniteness has arisen from supposing that other truths, really coordinate, overthrow or neutralize it.

I do not mean to combat directly or at length the errors which I think may be traced to losing sight of truth, except so far as may be necessary to establish or illustrate my position, or support the truth on either side, or to mark the limits between truth and error. I wish to treat the subject positively rather than negatively, not so much to attack error as to put forward truth in the comprehensive form in which I believe it to exist in Scripture, and to have been realized in the early church.

I am perfectly aware that such an attempt may well be considered above the powers of him who makes it; but I have long been persuaded that he who wishes to do good in the world must often throw

aside such personal considerations, not only by setting at nought blame when unjust, but by running the risk of being justly blamed, if there is on the other hand a chance that the church or even society may be thereby benefitted; and it is in this feeling that I submit what I have to say to the judgment of others, in the hope and prayer that if there be any truth in it God will help and prosper it; if it be false, that He may be graciously pleased to overrule and hinder it.

I have been induced to enter upon this subject by the conviction that the views against which I am putting forward the comprehensiveness and definiteness of faith are unsound in themselves, and bring with them more of danger than of real charity to those for whose welfare they are devised.

First, any partial or untrue exhibition of Christianity is dangerous to our real spiritual interests. It seems almost a truism to say that man cannot alter the scheme of salvation, or the dimensions, so to speak, of saving faith. If all Christians in all parts of the world were to agree that this degree of belief or that degree of belief should be sufficient, it would not make the slightest difference in the counsels of God's foreknowledge, or in the actual nature of faith. It is true, that such an agreement would give a high degree of probability that the view thus put forth would be the true one, but still it would not make it true. Amid all the quarrels of man, the truth of God remains fixed, and the voice of man is of no more avail than it would be to alter

the course of the winds, or the current of the sea, or to add a cubit to his stature. Over these indeed, and over subtler energies than these, we have established a sort of dominion; we have in some sort bound the elements to our service; we entrust to them our lives, our wealth, our thoughts, and bid them carry us and our's from one end of the world to the other, and, lo, they obey; but it is only because we have found out the properties and laws which God has given them, and use them according to His will. Once transgress these limits but a hair's breadth, once try to impose on them laws which God has not fixed, or to give them orders which are not the interpretations of His commands, then the pliant water and the impalpable air become more immovable than the rocks, more obstinate than man himself; and these visible creatures of God's power do not laugh to greater scorn the attempts of man to alter them according to his own pleasure than do the invisible realities of His will, the powers, and laws, and truths of the spiritual world.

But when I say that no man has the right, no man has the power, to prescribe *suo arbitrio* to another what he shall or what he shall not believe under peril of his soul, I do not mean that the Church has no authority in controversies of faith, or that it ought not to be listened to therein. I do not see how a church can exist without dogmatic theology, any more than without practical teaching. A church has the right, nay, she is bound to state clearly what she believes to be the necessary conditions and way

of salvation, what she believes God to have said; less than this she dare not, more than this she cannot do; but then it is necessary only so far as God has willed it, by virtue of God's will, not by virtue of the human dogma or decree. All that has been said or written by theologians or decreed by councils will not affect a single soul, except so far as, being true or false, it leads to truth or error. A church or any body of Christians may fix the terms of faith or practice on which they will admit others to be partakers of their communion; but they cannot take the Holy Spirit from those to whom the Holy Spirit is promised, or give His grace where God has not given it; the voice of prayer will be heard if a man be in the truth, though he be for that very truth's sake cast out of a visible church, while the most solemn absolution of an impenitent sinner is but mockery. Thus no man's destiny for eternity will be decided by what he says or thinks of himself, or by what others think of him, but by what he himself is in Christ; and therefore in our religious statements truth is the point to be regarded, and not charity; for charity does not obtain in the simple setting forth of God's truth, (except in the mode of doing it,) or in denying error, any more than in defining the laws of light or number; or if charity comes in at all, it forbids us to withhold what we in our consciences believe to be God's truth, and therefore necessary for the salvation of souls. It does not follow that he who simply opposes error does even in wish produce the condemnation of any one; nay, rather if we hold our

tongue against error, shall we be guilty of our brother's blood. The physician is not uncharitable, he does not arm fever or poison with death, he is not the destroying angel who rides on the pestilence, because in science or practice he sets forth the principles and conditions of life, the causes and results of disease. And as charity is in nowise violated by contending earnestly for the faith, (if it were so St. Paul would not have told us to do it,) so neither is it furthered by pretending to give salvation to all men. Kind-hearted theologians must remember, that the power of the keys is not committed to them any more than to the bishop of Rome. Salvation is not ours to give: and it is no charity to persuade men that it is, or that the terms thereof are just what any one chooses to make or believe them. It is moreover a practical injury to our eternal interests to take away from faith any doctrine which God designed for it; for every such doctrine is meant to bear its part in the work of the Spirit on the soul, so that the faith of those who reject this or that truth must needs be imperfect not only in belief but in practice.

And, secondly, as these views are dangerous in practice, so are they unsound in theory; for when we allow that each opinion by itself is possibly true, we allow that each is possibly false, and this we cannot do without taking from truth that which makes it true and from belief that which makes it faith. That which is essentially and not merely accidentally true refuses to fraternize with error; faith, like the real mother in the

judgment of Solomon, refuses any compromise which shall destroy that on which her heart is fixed.

In fact, the very notion that it matters not to the reality of a man's faith, whether he believes little or much of what God has revealed, disproves itself; the faith of which it speaks cannot be real faith; for this is no transient emotion or conviction confining itself to this matter or that, but comprehending all Gospel truth, and realizing the whole will of God as far as it is within its reach. Faith is the reflection of the Divinity on the soul, as far as that Divinity has been pleased to reveal Himself, and therefore faith must be one and indivisible even as God, Who is the object and author thereof. It is God Whom faith contemplates in His nature, His attributes, His counsels, His dealings with men, and it is a contradiction in terms to call that faith which wilfully accepts only part of these, as it is a contradiction in thought to view God only in part of these His relations, which can be separated only by a fiction of the reason, to enable us to form conceptions of infinite and indivisible perfection.

And the same conclusion follows from the nature of faith as a habit or state of mind. To those whom God has called He has given a power of discerning spiritual things; an eye of the soul whereby they are able to receive Divine truth, even as in the natural man there exists a power of discerning or receiving moral or physical truth. This spiritual vision differs indeed in different individuals, as the Divine light is poured upon Divine things in greater

or less abundance, and Divine things presented to it in greater or less variety; hence we find it spoken of in different degrees in Scripture: how different in degree was the faith of the centurion from the faith of St. Paul, and yet in both it was essentially the same, the perception and hearty reception of the Divine Messenger in whatever degree He was pleased to place Himself before them, as the Miracle-worker, or the Prophet, or the Priest, or the Sacrifice, or the Judge. Where Divine truth falls on the mind without affecting it, there faith in its full and perfect nature cannot really be, just as there is no sight in the eye on which light falls powerless. That temper of mind then, which accepts some truths and rejects others, cannot be more than the semblance and counterfeit of faith—if it had been faith, it would have recognized one and all alike.

And as faith from its own nature cannot be partial, so neither from its own nature can it be uncertain; it does not admit to itself the notion of the possibility of error. Grounding itself on the revelation of an omniscient Being, it so completely acquiesces in the certainty of its object, that to suppose the possibility of this being unreal destroys it. It is not a mere weighing of probabilities; the mind in suspense, first inclining to one side and then to the other: but resting on the truth which it apprehends, it becomes a very part of our intellectual consciousness as well as of our moral being; so that things hoped for are as substantially before us as if we held them in our hands, we have as sure a witness of things

unseen as if we saw them actually with our eyes. Its sphere may be enlarged, but its nature is not changed. It is the clear and indelible impression of Divine revelation on our very being, so that it works into and with all the faculties and energies, and governs them with an unvarying and undoubting voice. The various doctrines must work themselves thoroughly into the reason, feelings, affections, and how can this be as long as we doubt whether they are not deceptions rather than doctrines? He who doubts whether he may be sure, has a witness in himself that he has but the shadow of faith.

I confess it seems to me contrary to the very notion of a Divine revelation, to suppose that God has revealed truth of such a sort or in such a way that after all it is no truth to us, but varies with the short-sighted and wayward reason of each individual; for once admit the principle, and there may be as many shades of truth as there are individuals in the world. It is surely no scriptural theology which says, "Let every man be true, and God a liar;" for if St. John tells us, that he who believes not the record which God gave of His Son makes Him a liar, what are we to think of those who say that God has given us no record of His Son, or one so doubtful that no man can be certain what it is?

It is true, that our Saviour's teaching was often clothed in parables, so that His meaning might be obscure to those who could not profit by it; but still to those who were able to hear, it presented a definite notion and image, while to those who were

not, it conveyed no notion at all, or a wrong one. It was not that what both the one and the other gathered from it was equally and indifferently true, but that one did, and the other did not comprehend our Saviour's meaning.

It is true also that we are said to see "through a glass darkly," "δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι," and this text has been used to show that it is impossible to say with certainty what is revealed and what is not. The more correct translation however is, *in a glass, in a riddle.* We see in a glass the reflection of things invisible, not the very things themselves; but a reflection is not necessarily less distinct and clear than the object itself; we see Divine truths only as they are reflected on our spiritualized reason; but they are reflected as clearly and distinctly as that whereon they are reflected admits; as far as our spiritualized reason can grasp such mysteries unto understanding there is no uncertainty; we do not perhaps see the whole, but that does not make what we do see indistinct[f]. The mountain top may be hid in clouds, but the rocks and woods, the vineyard at its foot are not for that reflected less distinctly in the polished surface. We see them ἐν αἰνίγματι; we cannot comprehend them in all their relations; they are mysteries and puzzles to us. We see them in a glass: we cannot subject them to the same searching process as we do earthly truths in the visible objects in which they reside. We must be content to receive them as they are presented to us; we must be content to be puzzled

[f] Calv. ad loc.

by the mysteries thus partially disclosed to us, but still there is no ground for uncertainty or doubt as far as they are disclosed. Our inability is no reason for disbelieving, but rather for acquiescing in them. Thus did the Apostles see our Saviour transfigured before them clearly enough, but they knew not what to say, nor what to think of the vision; thus the notion of eternity set forth clearly in Scripture is to us, who know only time, a riddle; thus the ever blessed Trinity, which we see so distinctly in the glass of faith, is a mystery we cannot solve; thus even the Deity Himself, revealed as He is so certainly in Nature and in Scripture, is revealed ἐν αἰνίγματι. He baffles our keenest wit, and confounds our minds as soon as they try to search Him out. The time will come when these riddles may be read to us, but our souls and bodies must first have undergone that change which is to fit them for seeing face to face. Each degree of revelation is suited to the state to which it belongs; the present partial is suited to what we are, the future total to what we shall be.

But it may be said, it is not meant that Divine truth is in itself uncertain; but that it is uncertain *to us*, that we have not faculties to grasp it firmly; but if not, why not? What is faith but a faculty of the soul purified, strengthened, enlightened to apprehend Divine things, and if not so purified, strengthened, enlightened, how can our weak, dark, carnal perceptions be called faith, except in a secondary and almost figurative sense? We have al-

ready seen that faith excludes uncertainty; if then our faculties cannot in Divine things rise above uncertainty, then they cannot be properly termed faith. Whatever uncertainty exists in some men's minds arises from their hearts not being sufficiently in subjection to the Spirit; the truths revealed are not uncertain, unless we make them so by trying to reduce them to human proportions, and to measure them by a human standard. The more we examine into the nature and origin of this uncertainty, the more I think shall we see the necessity of all dogmatic theology being founded on that comprehensive belief, which accepts without questioning, which with bowed head and willing heart listens humbly to what the Lord says concerning Himself and us.

And, if I rightly gather the mind of our Church, in her dogmatic as well as her practical teaching, it is in this sense that she may justly be called a broad Church, including many differing views. She is a broad and comprehensive Church, but it is with reference to the breadth and comprehensiveness of Divine truth, and not to the vacillation and indefiniteness of human opinion. It is not so much that she meant to take all opinions under her wings, (though this of course is an accidental result,) but that she meant to accept and set forth the several truths out of which those opinions had grown; it is not that she meant to include men of every shade of opinion, as if the faith were indefinite or their differences unimportant, as if each was in complete and sufficient possession of truth, but that she felt herself

bound to lay before men the whole counsel of God, trusting to Him to overrule whatever danger there might be in so doing. It is not that her view is dim and uncertain, if she at one time brings one doctrine forward, at another time another, but that she is far-sighted and comprehensive; it was not in the way of a disloyal compromise of the faith once delivered to the saints and entrusted to her stewardship that she embraced opposing doctrines in her teaching, opposing parties in her communion, but because she recognised in each portions of the truth, however exaggerated or distorted, and she trusted that each would correct and perfect each; hence it is that men of opposite opinions are able each to claim our Reformers as favouring their peculiar views[g], because our Reformers held them both as far as they were true, and modified each by the other as far as it was false. I cannot look upon those Fathers of our Church without reverential wonder, as men whose natural powers God was pleased in that emergency to strengthen with an especial gift of discernment of Himself and His Scriptures. The Church of the saints had long been in ruins; above and around it the ingenious foolishness of men had raised an imposing structure, with all that could please the eye, or cheat the reason, or enlist the sympathies of the men who worshipped there. It was their business to search among the half forgotten ruins for what-

[g] This is sufficiently illustrated in the arguments held on the theological points which have unhappily been matters of strife in our own times.

ever bore the impress of Divine workmanship, to pick up a key-stone here, a column there, a moulding here, and thus to reconstruct the sanctuary after the pattern of primitive times; and by God's blessing on their labour, or rather by the presence of God's Holy Spirit in their hearts, they missed nothing which was necessary to their work; and the Church of Christ rose beneath their hands, and now stands among us in its beautiful yet simple completeness; weakened indeed and marred by the want of faith and firmness in those who have been built into her spiritual building: but in herself, as a depository of God's truth from generation to generation, in her liturgies, her doctrines, her ordinances, her sacraments, setting forth fully before us the Divine will, and the Divine scheme of salvation, as it was set forth by Christ and His Apostles.

And though the great variety of religious views and parties tell a sad tale of the lack of the Spirit of truth dwelling in us, yet, as regards our Church as an ark of the truth, it is no slight witness to her Scriptural character, that men of so many different opinions have found and still find shelter under her wings, and think that they have Scriptural grounds for doing so; nor would I have it otherwise: I believe if any one of the parties were to succeed in driving the other out, there would be, as things are at present, a truth lost; it would exist indeed in formularies and articles of faith as long as these were unaltered; for this is one blessing of a fixed liturgy and creed, that truth is preserved in spite of men's

rejection of it; but it would be dead as far as exercising any influence over the minds of that generation, and it could not be revived in another without much strife and trouble. I confess that I believe, that if our Church were what God designed her to be, what perhaps our Reformers sometimes dared to hope she would be, if her clergy and laity were filled with the Spirit of God at all in proportion to their opportunities and privileges, there would not be in her differing parties holding different truths, but one united body, holding even as the Church in the days of old, all truths in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. It might be that one truth or the other would at this time or that be brought more prominently forward according to the needs of person or place, but not so as to overshadow the rest, just as in the primitive writers, and even in Scripture, we find one part of the Christian character spoken of as if it were the whole; sometimes as if it were nothing but love, sometimes nothing but hope, sometimes as a mere intellectual belief, sometimes as repentance; because perfect hope, perfect love, perfect belief, perfect repentance, all meet together in perfect Christian faith; and it is not that any one of these is the whole, but that each properly implies the rest; so that in this, as in all things, Scripture puts before us what we should be. And would that it were so; would that the Spirit of truth might by the reality of our prayers, and the piety of our hearts, and the warmth of our love, and the holiness of our lives, and the earnestness of our desires, be

won to come among us as the Spirit and Power of peace, so that the same faith should speak among us though in different tongues; as it is, what I should pray for, as the result of the idea I shall endeavour to set before you is this, that while we are zealous and anxious in maintaining what we believe to be the truth, we should look earnestly and lovingly on that which others think to be true, and see if there be not something therein which we lack; that each may learn from each; surely there is scarcely one of us who can say *Lord, I believe*, but has reason to add *help Thou my unbelief;* we have all of us reason to be on our guard lest, our hearts being hardened by that pride and self-sufficiency which is the spirit of unbelief, Divine truth should be shining around us without our comprehending it. Thus might we hope that our faith will attain its Scriptural proportions, and our Zion be at peace, and better able to defend God's kingdom, against superstition on the one hand, and godless indifferentism on the other.

Not that there is to be any compromise of truth: compromise may obtain in matters of state policy or of individual interest, but I do not see whence either individuals or churches get the right to compromise one jot or one tittle of Divine revelation: to say "I will allow that what I believe is matter of doubt, is no belief, no revelation, if you will allow the same of what you believe." No man is to sacrifice what he Scripturally believes to be true; on the contrary, he must thoroughly, and practically, and humbly realize the truth which he holds, before he can see the

truth which others hold. There is surely a spiritual affinity between truth and truth: each truth which is realized in its due proportions, makes our apprehension of other truths in *their* proportions more quick and sure; but each must be realized, not as a point for controversial warfare or theological victory, but as a soul-stirring life-guiding principle; in proportion as we do this, one truth will open our eyes to more truth; in proportion as it is to us a mere point in theology, it will dim our eyes and hide other truth from us.

Nor is the spiritual sphere of our minds at all narrowed, nor our spiritual liberty abridged thereby, but rather much enlarged and increased. Men on either side are now in captivity to their own one-sided opinions; this truth or that truth is keeping them bound to itself, so that they do not enjoy the range which God has provided for them. *The* truth will set them free. God has given us a vast and comprehensive revelation of His own Divine nature and counsels, and of man's position, duties, and destinies; and the more we realize this in all its parts, the more extended will be our sphere of spiritual thought, the more complete our knowledge of and communion with Him, the more completely shall we be transformed to His image. It is true many things in the spiritual world are obscure and mysterious to us; but the more we believe the more will be given us to believe, the greater will be our power of believing; the more will faith be revealed to faith. There may seem to us in the

revelation many impossibilities, many contradictions; but as we grow in all truth the impossibilities will change into realities, the contradictions into harmony; we shall see more clearly the meaning of each doctrine, as we allow its influence to be impressed on our soul by faith and practice; as we fix the eye of faith on the yet far off figures, they will be made nearer and clearer to us; the mist, the clouds, the distance will melt away before the intensity of our gaze, and we shall almost anticipate the time when we shall see face to face; each doctrine, each mystery will assume its proper place and proportion, will exercise its proper influence over our hearts and lives. We shall know what each has to say to us, what each would have us to do; we shall see how all spring from, all end in, all have their meaning from *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*

# LECTURE II.

HEBREWS XIII. 8.

*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.*

IT is the natural result of the truth which breathes throughout a Divine Revelation, that Christianity gives us far more exalted ideas of the Supreme Being and all that belongs to Him than any of the other systems which have stood in the place of religion to man. The God of the Christian is not a mere deified hero, or an abstract essence or power. The very fact, that we have no images of thought or speech whereby we can adequately represent God to ourselves, does but make Him known to us in His real nature as higher and better than any thing we can imagine. The heaven of the Christian is not a mere beautiful earth above the clouds—think of it as we may, we can form no real picture of it, and yet no Christian can think of it without the deepest interest and hope. If God and heaven are the proper objects of religious thought and feeling, then is the Christian blessed above all men, if it were only in having a true object of worship, a real resting-place for his soul.

And though God and heaven are thus presented to us in all their majesty, yet is the Christian's attention drawn to earth with an interest no less intense. It is not as in the so-called religion of old that we have put before us the creations of poetic fancy, which loved to people earth, sea, and sky with ideal divinities; nor yet the fables of the grosser mythology, which gave to the gods the desires, the enjoyments, the passions, and even the crimes of humanity; nor yet are we taught to listen for the Divine voice coming forth from the caves or shrines which superstition assigned to the Divinity as its dwelling place on the earth.

But the Christian's gaze is fixed on earth, as the place wherein our salvation was accomplished by Him who came down from heaven, God manifest in the flesh, living and dwelling in visible existence and shape, as man among men, *the man Christ Jesus:* on Him whose nature is so infinite, and whose functions so manifold, that they cannot be taken in with one glance of even the spiritual eye. God, Man, Son, Prophet, Priest, King, Saviour, Redeemer, Mediator, Judge, Sacrifice, Power, Word, Wisdom, Light, Life—what words shall fitly declare His glory, what mind fully conceive it?

It is no wonder then that when men tried to bring down this all-wonderful Being to the level of human understanding, to form of Him as consistent conceptions as they did of any of God's creatures, they were obliged to strip Him of His glories; and thus while they were professing to be wise above

others, they were shutting themselves out from the knowledge which others, more simple-minded, possessed. Hence it is that from the very earliest times so many heresies sprung up as to Him who is the very Truth itself, from whom all truth springs. There was in Him of necessity from His very nature, from the very scheme of salvation, so much which reason could not comprehend or reconcile, that men who would not be content with what the Bible told them, were obliged to solve their difficulties by taking a partial and carnal view of Him, as their fancies, or lives, or circumstances led them to look at Him exclusively from the one side or the other—How can He who is God be also man? How can He who is God have died? How can He who is subordinate to the Father be one with the Father? How can He who is eternal have ever been begotten? These and the like difficulties, which are founded entirely on the notion that heavenly things differ in no respect from earthly, occupied the attention and made shipwreck of the faith and hope of thousands; many a one whom God had gifted with His choicest natural gifts, whom He had embraced in His church, and brought to the living waters of scriptural truth, was led astray by a wayward love of system, a wayward impatience of submitting to what can not be understood or explained, a wayward confidence in human perceptions, inferences, deductions. Where Christ was looking for adoration, there was nothing to be found or heard but philosophical questions and logical doubts as to

those very points which the Apostles received and set forth in humble and thankful faith. These men would not receive the gospel until there was nothing left which their reason had not mastered. It seems to me that this was just the disputing and the wisdom against which St. Paul warned his children in the faith. Happy they who amid those perilous heresies listened to his warning, and throwing philosophy and vain deceit to the winds, shut their ears to those who would have robbed their faith of its deepest and highest objects of contemplation. Strange that men should refuse to be borne upon the boundless ocean, unless they can fathom its depths; that they should refuse to drink in the glories of the sun, unless they can master the causes of its light and warmth. Wiser, surely, they who are content to wonder, and adore, and love.

That there are in Scripture many (humanly speaking) contradictions as to our Saviour, no one, I think, will deny; but according to the principle I have set forth in the first lecture, we have not to reconcile these statements: all that we have to do is to assure ourselves that they are in Scripture: to study them separately and together: to find out and lay to heart what they separately and together teach us. It may be that some of them will be to us as long as we are here contradictions: while of others we may see how they fit as it were into each other, and have a definite place and office in the scheme of our salvation; at all events, comprehensive faith accepts them all.

The first point which would occur to one to whom Jesus Christ was for the first time made known would naturally be, "Who is He?" and this brings us directly to the consideration of the view which Christianity gives us of the Divine nature, as contained in the revelation that God is Three and One. This question indeed has been so fully and so exhaustively treated by other hands, that it is not necessary for me to enter into it, except so far as it bears on the principle I am advocating, or as the principle may be brought to bear upon it; for in regard to those within our church, and indeed to the majority of Christendom, where there is no difference of opinion on this point, I would rather use it as an admitted truth in support of the principle that opposed notions in theology may be true together; while to the others I would urge my principle in answer to their objections to the doctrine which are based mainly on the theory that the same Being cannot be both Three and One.

The proofs of this doctrine of the Trinity, whether direct, such as in the institution of baptism, or indirect, as where each person is separately spoken of as God, or has Divine powers and attributes assigned to Him, as well as the argument from primitive consent, are so familiar to all, that they need no further mention. But against all this direct scriptural evidence, it is urged that there are other passages of Scripture which both directly and indirectly represent God as One; for I have not to deal with those who deny the doctrine simply on the ground of its being con-

trary to reason, but to those who oppose it on the ground of its being incompatible with other statements in Holy Writ. These statements, they say, cannot be true together, and therefore we have as much right to choose the one as the other; and since one or the other cannot on Scripture grounds be true, we are justified in taking that which is most agreeable to the general sense of mankind, and the voice of natural religion. I suppose this would not unfairly represent the reasoning whereby such a person would deny the doctrine of the Trinity.

Now our church rightly maintains that the proof that God is One does in no way exclude the proof of there being in the unity of this Godhead three persons. We are Unitarians in as proper and full a sense as those to whom the name is more technically and exclusively given: but we are Trinitarians also; we maintain that these, humanly speaking, inconsistencies, subsist and are true together, and that the acceptance of the one does not necessitate the rejection of the other. For why should it? The notion that the one destroys the other is entirely based on the supposition that the Divine nature is the same in kind as our own, subject to the same conditions as ourselves—conditions which, after all, are only abstractions of the mind, shadowing dimly forth those accidents and properties which are attached to an imperfect state of being, but from which the existence of God must from its very perfection and infinity be free; *one* and *many*—*divisible* and *indivisible*—*separate*, *together*—*before* and *after*, and the like, are simply

human modes of expressing certain states and relations of number, space, and time, in the compound and complex universe: while to Him whose being is one and simple, whom size, space, time, affect not, they are, properly speaking, inapplicable. Nor should we with any propriety apply them to Him, were it not that the Scripture partially reveals Him by them as the modes of conception and thought necessary to beings such as we are. The Scripture then being the only ground whereby these notions and terms are applicable to the Deity, it follows that they are applicable to Him only in the way in which Scripture has applied them: that is, by opposing them one to the other, and thus giving us some idea of what is properly above human comprehension; to refuse to receive them because they are opposed to each other, is to refuse to receive knowledge in the only way in which it can be given: for reason itself confesses that the only way in which we can conceive or define those natures and essences which belong to a different and far higher state of things than our own, is by that combination of notions which we might rightly reject in matters which our faculties can grasp. In fact, almost all our true notions of the Deity involve attributes which would in created things be incompatible, as may be seen even in the points of natural religion which have always been connected with the Divine essence where it has been at all realised by man. Take for instance the omnipresence of the Deity; the notion that a person is in more than one place at the same

moment of time, is as contrary to our natural conceptions of possibility as the Trinity in Unity, if not more so; and yet mankind instinctively attribute to God personality and ubiquity, and acquiesce in the difficulty implied in their conjunction; and while some have pretended to solve the difficulty by Pantheism, or an anima mundi, yet it is easy to see that they do in reality but bring before us more vividly the difficulty they profess to solve. In sooth, when we begin to think on the Divine nature, and try to search it out by those faculties of analysis which are almost all-powerful within their proper sphere, to try to systematize and to measure it, instead of realising it spiritually by contemplation, our minds must find themselves lost, not only in the immensity, but the perplexity of the subject. We must acquiesce in what some might perhaps call contradictions, or else take from the Deity one after another of those notions which are involved in the idea of the Divinity, until at length He is brought down to the level of deified humanity. And thus it is in strict accordance with the theory and practice of sound reason, that the catholic faith, finding both Three Persons and One God clearly revealed in Scripture, accepts them both with wondering gratitude, as the only complete revelation of the Godhead which was ever vouchsafed to man. In days of old even philosophy was compelled to be content with very partial views of the Divinity: thinking men, indeed, sighing for more complete knowledge, searched out the secret places of their

own souls, to see if therein they could discern any reflection of God; looking around on outward things they felt after Him in the elements, the laws, the powers of the universe, if haply they might find Him; having only part, and feeling that it was only part, they longed and strove after what was yet lacking to that Divine science. Modern philosophy, now that God Himself has spoken, refuses to take the whole, and standing proudly aloof, thinks to choose for herself what part she shall accept and what reject: and falls back on theories and fancies not more real or satisfactory than the theology of antiquity.

And as in the essential existence of the Deity we must teach ourselves to acquiesce in unexplained difficulties as our best wisdom, so must we also expect to find them in His moral attributes when viewed from the side of earth. There are indeed instinctive feelings of morality embodying the rights and duties of man to man, correlative with many perfections and infirmities, bound up with our very being and our idea of goodness, to lose which would be almost to cease to be man. These may be said to have their birthplace in heaven, because they are the guides and laws which God's will has attached to man's nature; but to try to bind the Deity with such as these, is as if we were to try to guide Him by exciting in Him those passions the right operation and laws of which these principles of morality embody. In fact, to ascribe the attributes of human morality to God, seems to be only so far allowable as

it is our only way of expressing those partial glimpses of the Divine will which from time to time we are able to catch. At present we see only in part; we are sure indeed that every conceivable element of perfection must exist in the Divine Being, though not perhaps exactly in the way in which we should conceive of it. The notion of perfection is implied in the notion of God. This we can read in nature—in the pages of history, sacred and profane—in the events of the world as they pass before us—in the events of our own lives—in the experiences of our own hearts—in the primary notions of our own mind. And though to us His attribute of infinite justice and infinite mercy may seem to be opposed, yet in Himself He is as infinitely just as if there were no mercy, as infinitely merciful as if there were no justice; for we may not conceive of His attributes as if they were separate qualities or habits residing in a moral being, and operating in moral acts. However heathen poetry may have impressed such images on the minds and language of men, it is certainly contrary to the true idea of God to suppose that His nature is made up of parts and affected by passions. And it is the more necessary to insist upon this, because the rejection or misinterpretation of many parts of Scripture arises from arguing from human to Divine perfections. There are indeed those who map out the Divine mind, and bind the Divine will and power by chains of human possibility, necessity, and morality: who weigh one attribute against another, and thus work out what seems to them to be a consistent

scheme for the operations of His counsels; who will allow God to be wise, and just, and merciful, only in the way in which they themselves would be so; who say He cannot do this, He must have done that; and seem to think that if God had had them for counsellors, the world would have been more perfect, man more happy than we find him to be as God has created him and ordered his goings; nay, that God himself would have been more wise than Scripture reveals Him to us. With such questionings and systems faith has nought to do; she believes whatever Scripture reveals, as she reads it therein; Scripture tells us that God is just, and we believe it. The same Scripture tells us that unborn generations were lost for the sin of Adam; the sufferings of the innocent were exacted in lieu of the punishment of the guilty, and we believe it. Scripture tells us that God takes vengeance, and we believe it; and yet that sinners practically go unpunished, and we believe it. The Scripture tells us that God is merciful, and willeth not the death of a sinner, and we believe it: the same Scripture speaks of eternal punishment, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is never quenched, and we believe it. Terrible in vengeance, strict in justice, infinite in mercy! faith receives and dwells upon each and all. She receives them all, knowing that the terms whereby they are expressed are but as the shadows which the painter is obliged to use to define and express the rays of light, which fall with different hues from the one single indivisible centre

of pure light—terms whereby we are able to conceive somewhat, though after a very imperfect fashion, of Him who dwelleth in the heavens out of our sight.

We may see from this how very inadequate and fallacious are all *a priori* conceptions of the particular exhibitions of God's nature in His dealings with men. We may argue in general that His justice, mercy, power, goodness, love, will exhibit themselves in some way or other to man; we may argue of an act of God that it is just because it is God's, because there can be no unrighteousness with God; we may argue that the idea of injustice is necessarily excluded from the idea of God: and that therefore what might at first sight seem to be unjust or unkind, cannot be really so, because the Judge of the world must needs do right, because "He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He[a]." But we cannot put one of God's attributes against another, and argue negatively that His justice could not have acted in this manner or that, as Scripture has in express terms revealed it to us, because it would be contrary to His mercy or His love, for the simple reason that such moral contradictions imply separate parts and passions and perfections: and that His nature being one and indivisible, it follows that His mercy and justice and love are inseparable likewise; and therefore we cannot tell how His mercy, or love, or justice

[a] Deut. xxxii. 4.

would act by itself. We may contemplate Him in silent adoration as just, or merciful, or kind, as He is revealed in Scripture, but we may not wrest or reject Scripture to suit our notions of a deified humanity. Man may be in his own conceits elevated above his real position, by fancying that he can see himself reflected in the Majesty of heaven, that he himself is as God only in a lower sphere; but I confess it seems to me worse than vain to attempt to pourtray God with a pencil dipped in mere earthly colours; just as one shrinks from those representations wherein the painter, with a mistaken and presumptuous piety, has thought to image the Deity by clothing Him in the most perfect proportions and most venerable aspect of human shape and feature.

The same comprehensive belief which accepts the doctrine of Three Persons and One God, and consequently the Divinity of our Saviour, holds likewise when we read of Him as man, coming down from heaven, manifest in the flesh. It is not however His humanity which is so much called in question as his Divinity. It is undoubted that it is humanly speaking impossible to reconcile His being God with all the Divine attributes and perfections, and yet at the same time being man with all human passions and infirmities—all that faith cares to know is that Scripture does most certainly and definitely speak of Him as God and man; and therefore we believe that He is both God and man, "not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person."

[Nor is true faith staggered in her belief by the various contradictory statements which we find in Scripture on various points connected with our Saviour; such, for instance, as that He is coexistent from the beginning with, and yet begotten from everlasting of the Father—that He is one with the Father and yet His Son—that the Father is greater than the Son, and yet He is equal to Him. All these and the like do not to faith suggest doubts, but present themselves as mysteries, which we, bound as we are by the conditions of our present state, can neither fathom nor explain; as sources of fruitful meditation and wonder, which may impress upon our mind a wholesome sense of the Divine Majesty of Him who though he took upon Himself the likeness of man, and the form of a servant, yet so evidently belongs to an infinitely higher sphere of existence, and refuses to bow before our laws of being or our laws of thought; and if the Church has ever attempted an explanation of those mysteries, as in the Athanasian Creed, it is because heresies forced the question upon her[a], and because she hoped that she might stop the evil and reclaim those who were taken captive of it[b].]

And as we receive Christ both as God and man, so do we take no partial view of Him when He is presented to us, not so much in His own nature as

[a] See Bacon, of Church Controversies, vol. 2, page 501, Lond. 1819. See also Hilarius de Trin. II. 1, quoted by Giesler, Kirchen Gesch. I. 367.

[b] The passages between brackets were omitted in delivery.

in His relation to men, and in His functions in the work of our salvation. In this as in other points, the faith of the early Church, and I may say of our own, comprehends the whole truth, while each of the contending parties is in error by stopping short of it on either side. What each directly affirms of our Saviour from Scripture faith receives, but in that each denies some Scriptural statement concerning Him she goes further, higher, and deeper than they do; she has all that they severally and separately hold.

There are those who look on Christ as a Hero, a man raised above His fellows by the loftiness of His spirit, the greatness of His actions; and He is undoubtedly the greatest man, the greatest hero, if you will, who ever appeared upon earth; with all human infirmities, He triumphed over the weaknesses and frailties which mar the perfection of ordinary men; He won men's hearts, and founded by His will a power before which imperial Rome was forced to bow. A Hero doubtless He was, and as such He is represented in Scripture. No one realises this so truly as he who believes Him to be God. How could it be otherwise? how could God come among men in any other character? nay, surely the very act of suffering on earth for the salvation of sinners was in itself an act of heroism to which neither history nor mythology present any parallel. The highest heroes of poetry or of history were men who, finding themselves in the midst of and set above an evil world, did their part boldly in the

battle; but this our Hero entered upon it by His own free will; and as for His actual doings on earth, Fame herself grows pale beside them. To attempt to enlarge upon them, or to clothe them with human panegyric, would be but to diminish their grandeur: one might as well try to give fresh hues to the rainbow, or to gild the setting sun. They are familiar to us; every page of Scripture bears their impress; they are written on every faithful heart.

As a Hero, then, Christian faith receives Him. But was He nothing more? Watch the child Jesus as He comes forth, led by His mother's hand, from the temple, followed by the wondering eyes and thoughts of the doctors, and see even there in His earliest years the Teacher sent from God. Mingle with the crowds that gather round Him as He raises the widow's son or bids Lazarus come forth from the grave; as He stills the sea, or cures the sick, or casts out devils; listen to Him ordaining sacraments, instituting a ministry, giving new commandments or confirming the old ones; follow Him again when, in His glorified body after His resurrection, He spake to His disciples of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God; and who can fail to recognise the Prophet of the Gospel revelation, the Leader of the new Exodus, the Moses of the new covenant? And Christian faith, too, delights to dwell on Him in this character and office; to watch His miracles of mercy and of power, and drink in from His lips the secret mysteries of the Divine

nature and counsels, principles and rules for life: new hopes to animate and restrain; new commandments to guide. Who can choose but exclaim, *Surely never man spake as this man! what man can do these works except he be sent of God?*

But, again, listen more attentively and look more curiously. Amid all His acts of heroic benevolence and authority, amid these deep and practical lessons of morality, there fall from His lips and appear in His actions indications of His Divine nature and power; and instinctively, unless the instinct be overpowered by pride or foolishness, we fall down to worship God, made flesh for our redemption. His wisdom, His mercy, His power receive fresh hues, as being the very words and works of God Himself. And if this instinctive worship of the heart were at a loss how to clothe itself, it would find in Holy Scripture words of adoration put into men's mouths by the Holy Spirit Himself, as fit expressions to be spoken of and addressed to Christ. If the Bible be true, the fact of His Divine nature is verily and really expressed in these expressions of worship; if the Bible be not true, then all the revelation contained in it fades away, and we are again reduced to the dreamy abstractions of philosophy, or the absurd fictions of a popular belief. Our Saviour's divinity and the whole Christian revelation stand or fall together. It is idle to talk of the evangelical writings as historic narratives like that of Mahomet; if the Bible be not true as a revelation, neither can it be as an history.

And so again in the crowning and finishing act of His earthly life; what can fitly express the wondering adoration with which faith sees the Man of Sorrows, the Captain of our salvation, nailed to the cross by the very men whom He came to save. Who is there who stands in imagination among the crowds on Mount Calvary without being moved by tender and pitiful interest when he beholds the patient bravery, the unconquered charity, the sublime resignation of the man Christ Jesus in the moments of His agony?

Again, who is there who is not struck with the unrepining obedience with which He Whom the Father sent submits to the will of Him Who sent Him. Surely in Him, above all others whom the world has seen or heard of, we recognise the devotion of One Who knows Himself to be sent by God on earth to do great things, and to change the destinies of man.

But the sufferings of the Hero, the obedience of the Prophet, can be realised and exhausted by human thought and feeling. There is something besides and above all this which Christian faith realises, which the more it is thought upon the more inexhaustible a source of thought and feeling is it found to be—the Son of man dying for us to restore us to the favour of God.

And as Christ is differently regarded as to His nature and office, so are there differences of opinion as to the way in which His death is connected with our salvation. What may be called the human theory of redemption is held by those who do

not recognise any act of reconciliation performed by Christ between God and man; who think that Christ's death was effectual to salvation only as raising the tone and destinies of the human race in setting before us an example, by the following of which we may raise ourselves above the common herd, and scale the heights of heaven for ourselves. Nor is their view so wholly wrong as to be wholly lost sight of: nay, it sets forth a great truth which we must not lose sight of; Christ did set us an example, *that we should follow his steps*[c], by the following of which man may be almost more than man: *I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done unto you*[d]. He did set us an example of obedience and virtue, in order that we should arm ourselves with the like mind; and woe unto us if we do not according to opportunities, which life presents in some shape or other to every man, follow the example He set. Christian suffering and Christian daring, Christian heroism[e], if you will, is part of the scheme of salvation; Christianity is not set before us as a pleasant path in which we may saunter leisurely along; an ever flowing stream on which we have only to embark to be passively and easily wafted to the land of promise without any effort on our part. We read of a battle—of hardships, of adversaries, of giants in the road, spiritual enemies on all sides. As there is much to do, much to endure,

[c] 1 St. Pet. ii. 21.

[d] St. John xiii. 15.

[e] Leighton, vol. iii. p. 234. ed. Lond. 1830.

much to overcome, so is there ample sphere for the highest heroism of men. Nay, where has the world seen greater heroism than was shown by those who, treading closely in their Master's steps, took up their cross boldly and denied themselves; who counted all things loss, so that they might come out as conquerors in the struggle in which God had placed them, victors in the race which He had given them to run?

Others, again, go somewhat further; they hold that Christ by His patience and obedience so pleased God that the souls of mankind were given Him as a reward, and that His patience and obedience thus worked out our salvation. Nor does faith look upon this obedience and patience as things apart from the work. Like all other acts of Christ's life, it bore its part; and doubtless the obedience of the second Adam has something especially to do in the reconciliation of man, inasmuch as it stood in contrast to, and in some sort did away with the disobedience of the first. When we read of His bowing to His Father's will, in spite of the inclinations of the flesh and the suggestions of Satan, we surely ought not to be moved with sympathy only, or wonder, or stirred up to imitation, but with a deep sense that all this, viewed merely in its external relations of obedience and patience, was suffered and done for us and for our salvation. The words of Scripture rise to our thoughts, *By the obedience of one many are made righteous.*

[The way, moreover, in which the end and purpose

of Christ's coming upon earth is spoken of combines all these views: sometimes as a Hero, to elevate human nature, to turn from sin, to destroy evil, to set captive souls free, to bring triumph and peace to the Israel of God; sometimes as a Prophet and Teacher to bear witness to the truth, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, a day-spring from on high; sometimes to obey and suffer, and to teach mankind by His example; sometimes simply to save sinners, to give us eternal life; sometimes more definitely to put away our sin by His death in the body; to be lifted up for the salvation of sinners.]

But we do not stop here; for as in Scripture, so in Christian faith, the prominent feature is the Lamb that was slain; Christ bearing our sins in His body on the tree; the blood which was shed; the sin-offering which was offered; the ransom which was paid.

And what is Christian faith without it? it may perhaps be a consistent philosophical theory based on human probabilities and counsels, and embodying what may seem to us the interests of the human race; it may be a code of most perfect morality, but it is not what it ought to be—the Bible written in our hearts; for who shall say that Scripture is indefinite on this point, that it speaks doubtfully? that it may perhaps be true that Christ died for us; perhaps it may not; that those who deny it may be as right as those who hold it? either it is in the Bible or it is not. And who can read Scripture without seeing that the sacrifice of Christ is put for-

ward as the key-stone to the whole fabric? Nay, those who deny the doctrine are forced practically and in the common sense view of the case, to admit that it is distinctly mentioned by every New Testament writer. The manifold forced arguments they are compelled to use; the number of facts they have to get rid of; the number of sentences to which they must give a forced interpretation; the number of words which must be wrested from their proper and acknowledged meaning: all these are in reality so many arguments furnished by the opponents in favour of the doctrine they oppose. In spite of themselves the truth rises up from their own lips, and stands forth in their own pages. They may prove beyond a doubt that our Saviour was man; faith receives it as fully as they do; but this does not disprove that He was God also. They may enlarge on His obedience and example as working in the redemption of man; faith receives it as fully as they do; but this is no reason why we should not likewise believe what Scripture tells us no less plainly and definitely, that He was offered as a sacrifice to suffer for our sins, in as true and literal sense as any of the sacrifices under the Law, which are in reality only so far effectual sacrifices as being the types and substitutes for the sacrifice of Christ. Nor does the absolute truth of any one of these make the others uncertain. We cannot say that the sacrifice is doubtful because the others are true, nor that the others are doubtful because the sacrifice is true. Christ's death indeed is not

always or only represented as a sacrifice: it is sometimes the price paid for our ransom from the power of sin; sometimes the price paid to purchase for us everlasting life; and each of these differs somewhat in idea from the notion of a sacrifice to atone for our sins; but these terms are not merely figurative, they represent realities,—real facts in God's counsels, in Christ's death, in our salvation. No one of these is excluded by the other; together they form one great whole; not indeed on exactly equal terms, for the sacrifice is the centre from which the others radiate, and to which all converge. The sacrifice is the essence; the others the antecedents rather, or the accidents. The sufferings and obedience of Christ would, as far as God's will is revealed to us, have been of no avail without the sacrifice; nor can we, with due regard to Scripture, say that the sacrifice could, according to the same Divine will, have been offered without these its parts; Scripture tells us that it pleased God *to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through suffering.*

In fact, the notion of uncertainty on this point seems frequently to arise from the lack of a fitting sense of our own demerits. Where a man feels that his sins deserve punishment, which if he were to pay in his own person he is for ever lost, then is this doctrine forced home to his heart; he feels it to be true; not that its Scriptural foundation is deficient, but as human pride destroys the effect of Scripture evidence, so does this sense of our sin realise and apply it.

The Pharisee and Publican go up to Calvary together: the one, proud of his knowledge, proud of his piety, spotless in his own conceit, unfailing in the performance of his duties, can at the best only wonder, and learn how to die patiently and bravely. To him the cross is a stumblingblock. The Publican standing, as in the temple afar off, with his—"God be merciful to me a sinner," feels that God has provided a ransom for him; is ready to believe that in the blood poured out the mercy he seeks for is vouchsafed to him.

And who shall say that this is a narrow faith? it takes in all that others have, and something above and beyond them. Who shall say that it is in theory less exalted, less worthy of the dignity or destinies of man, than the view which makes Christ a mere example, His death a mere act of obedience? In good truth, it has always seemed to me that a lack of a really high moral sense of the perfection and beauty of holiness lies at the bottom of the notion that man needs not the sacrifice of Christ and His righteousness. The standard of human perfection is low, men can come up to it; and therefore, fancying themselves able to purify and justify themselves, they feel no need of a sacrifice. That we should look forward to being clothed upon with a righteousness above the highest conceptions of man, to being presented before the throne of God pure and spotless as washed in the blood of the Lamb, not mere men, but men clothed upon by Christ, may be contrary to reason,

offensive to pride; but it is not contrary to the truest interests, the most earnest yearnings, the most sensible needs of him who knows earth, and has formed any real conception of heaven.

Who, again, shall say that the feelings excited by it are less divine, less true, less pure, that the heart in which it abides is less exalted, less filled with adequate notions of the Divine nature and counsels, or the life or office of Christ in all its parts? It may well be doubted whether the Socinian dwells on the patience and obedience of Christ with the same intensity of heart as the more scriptural and more comprehensive believer, who looks at them as combined with the sacrifice.

Three men go up to Calvary togeth r: the one gazes with curious wonder on the suffering of the Man of Sorrows, sympathizes perhaps with Him, and draws in a lesson of patience and endurance for the troubles of life. The second looks with grateful reverence on the moral act of obedience whereby he thinks Christ wins the favour of God for man; but who shall describe, what words express, the feelings of the one who views Him as suffering in his stead, crucified by his sins, reconciling him to God by bearing his punishment?

And who shall say that the knowledge which this divine mystery opens to us is narrow and degrading, because it calls on us to believe, even though we understand not? Surely God's revelations are, to say the least, as true knowledge as any thing we can find out for ourselves. If a man is higher the more

he knows, then surely we cannot object to a revelation that it is narrowing because it is higher and more extensive than any thing we have yet known; that it transports us beyond the sphere of human sight and thought, and confounds the petty imaginations and deductions of human knowledge. If it did not do so, it would not be divine. On the acknowledged principle of these rational philosophers, that knowledge elevates and purifies, that the higher the knowledge the better the man, they ought not to allow their prejudices to make them content with the lower when the higher is within their reach.

It seems, in good truth, well nigh impossible to estimate justly how much they lose who take their stand on one text and truth of Scripture relating to Christ, and refuse to acknowledge other truths and other texts which seem to overshadow or overthrow the view which has recommended itself to and occupied their minds. Not only do they shut themselves out from the ennobling and quickening thoughts, hopes, feelings, consolations, which arise from a comprehensive and definite faith in Christ as the Priest and Sacrifice, but there are other Scripture facts and mysteries which they are obliged to distort or deny: His miraculous conception: the power of His resurrection, whereby the dead are to rise from their graves, whereby we rise again into newness of life; the ascension into heaven; His eternal presence in the Church; His eternal mediation in heaven: all these must be given up;

all the texts which speak of them must be explained away as forgeries or delusions. Strange and suicidal misuse of reason, to employ it in struggling against the spiritual blessings wherewith Christ is waiting to bless them!

True faith, on the other hand, drawing her inspirations from Scripture, dwells on all that Christ was or did, and finds in all, subjects for adoration and thanksgiving; sees in all, the Father's love working towards our salvation. Thus is Christ brought before us by our Church in all His characters—Hero, Example, Prophet, Priest, King, Sacrifice; each act of His life and being exercises a definite influence on our spiritual state, and on our growth in grace, in spiritual strength, and in knowledge. When we look up to Him as the Captain of our salvation, the Prince of the people of God, the patient, the heroic Deliverer, we surely feel our hearts swell with loyalty and devotion, with patience and courage; we resolve to resist unto blood, striving against the enemy: we find our hearts armed and steeled to withstand the assaults of the evil one, and to triumph over him in the world even as Christ triumphed over him in the wilderness, and the garden, and the cross. When we listen to our Teacher, we cannot choose but drink in the words which fall from His lips in such persuasive force and beauty; we cannot choose but let our hearts be somewhat moulded and guided by His teaching. When we gaze on Him as our example, there rise up within us, without our bidding, good resolutions to tread in the steps of His humil-

ity, patience, charity, meekness. When we look at the crowning act of His obedience and submission to God's will, we cannot but feel, in spite of our fleshly selves, God's will stealing over our souls, and presenting itself to us as our reasonable service. When we know that He has bought us for Himself, we recognise His claims to our being His soldiers and servants throughout life. When we realise the fact that he has set us free, we feel it would be foolishness for us to let sin be master even of our mortal bodies. But it is chiefly by the adoring contemplation of His sacrifice on the cross, by the realising in our souls the fact and the aim of the shedding of His blood as an atonement for our sins, that we are raised above ourselves by a sense of the dignity and value of man; of the value of the soul, nay, of the value of Christ's body, for which He died; that we are awakened to a sense of the heinousness and deformity of sin, from which such an act of love could alone save us; that we are made alive to the glories of a heavenly life, to obtain which for us God sent His only begotten Son into the world, and allowed Him to die as a man; that we are stirred up to the work of attaining thereto. It is by recollecting that God, according to the revealed purposes of His Divine will, does avert the consequences of sin by His Son's bearing them for us, that we are made most fearful of sinning, most sensible of its danger: it is by recollecting that Christ died for us, that our spirits are most moved to love Him; it is by recollecting that Christ died for all men,

that we are most effectually touched with sympathy and charity towards those who, involved in the same ruin with ourselves, stricken with the same plague, are by the same act of the same Deliverer restored, by the same talisman of the same Physician healed. There is nothing that binds human hearts so strongly together as the lying under the same burden, and partaking of the same deliverance, being together lifted up above the interests and cares of this life by the same gratitude to a common Saviour, the same duties to a common Master, the same promptings of a common Guide, the same hopes of a common home, the same faith in a common Redeemer. It is by keeping in mind that a ransom has been paid for us, that our punishment has been borne for us, that we are most refreshed by consolation and assurance, knowing that it is not our own work which is to wash out our sins and to turn away the destroying angel from us, for Christ our Passover has for us been slain.

Nor is there in these feelings any thing indefinite or uncertain. Jesus Christ is to us *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. Faith knows whom she has believed, in whom she puts her trust; her fountain does not ebb and flow; is not now raised by a hope that Christ has made the atonement; now disturbed by a fear lest it be not so; not now hoping she may be right; now fearing she may be wrong; but being assured that God has spoken, and that He will not deceive man, enters with joy and thanksgiving on the work of her calling, ever looking up to the cross

and to Him who is nailed thereon. And should ever an unhappy doubt be cast over the soul, the shadow, as it were, of Satan passing by, she turns from it with hasty fear to the Bible Revelation, and finds therein more than sufficient answer to the delusions and temptations of the enemy.

Our souls indeed may well doubt if we lose sight of Christ dying for us, and atoning for our sins; fully aware of our infirmities, how weak the will to good, how fierce and strong and reckless the impulses to evil; finding ourselves bound up in a body in which the passions within are ever ready to repeat and enforce the temptation from without, we may well tremble and cry aloud, *Who shall deliver us from the body of this death?* but peace returns to us when, catching sight again of Christ bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, we are able to hear the words which faith speaks within, *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

# LECTURE III.

ROMANS vii. part of 24th and 25th verses.

*Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*
*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

MAN has ever been a mystery to himself. Of all God's living creatures, he alone, as far as we know, has within him a mixed nature. The angels in heaven are wholly good; the devils in hell are wholly bad; the brute creation move in obedience to fixed instincts, in which there is neither good nor evil; the wills of all these are simple and uniform: man alone is a contradiction. His action, as of some cunningly devised machine, seemingly regular and simple enough, is found to be produced by a number of impulses and checks, moving, balancing, controlling, disturbing each other. And that the movements of this wondrous piece of mechanism were deranged, that man was not what his Creator meant him to be, was perceived, or rather suspected by even heathen philosophy, with more or less accuracy; but the more it was looked into, the more perplexing it was. The great ancient master of the moral nature of man, though he has

given us a most masterly and correct analysis of the phenomena and immediate causes of this derangement, was unable to trace it to its real cause or devise any real remedy. These are both laid down by the apostle in the words of my text; the state and feelings of the man who found himself unable to combat the evil which he hated, and to do the good which he would, are well expressed in—*Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* and the only remedy is no less clearly stated in the words, *I thank God through Jesus Christ.*

At the very threshold then of our inquiry into the results of Christ's sacrifice, the question meets us, What is the body of this death from which Christ came to save us? in what does our salvation consist? what is the state of man by nature? how, and how far, is he restored by grace? On these points, as, alas! on most others, modern Christendom is not agreed.

There are those who hold that man is not all, or very little, fallen from the image in which he was created; that he is now as he came forth from the hands of his Maker. They point to the brighter, we can hardly say the bright, pages in man's history; to the virtues which have from time to time shone forth in the heathen world; to the almost divine thoughts which were breathed into many parts of ancient poetry and philosophy by men at whose feet Christians in all ages have been content to sit in the attitude of disciples; they point to the distinction between right and wrong in the mass; to the de-

voted lives, the calm constancy, the confiding resignation, the pure piety, the unruffled patience which we read of in the lives of those whose names are as household words even throughout civilized Christendom; they point to such texts as—"*These have the law written in their hearts;*" "*In every nation he that worketh righteousness is accepted of God;*" to the witness borne by Scripture to the presence of an accusing or excusing voice of conscience: and they argue that beings who display such capacities and exhibit such development, and are spoken of in such terms in Scripture, cannot truly be conceived or spoken of as fallen creatures.

[As for those who deny the fall on the ground that it is contrary to God's mercy and justice as conceived of by them, it is not necessary to repeat here what has been already said on all denial of direct Scripture statements and human experience on *a priori* grounds. The practical bearing of their view on human life is much the same as of the one just stated, which has however this advantage, that it is built on a less shifting foundation than the creature's notions of the Creator.]

Others, again, hold that man is wholly fallen, nothing but evil; that he has not and never can have in him any trace of good; they dwell on that which, as experience as well as Scripture tells us, proceedeth out of the heart of man, evil thoughts, evil desires, evil works; they point to the almost satanic hatred, wrath, jealousy, revenge, cruelty with which nearly every page of history is darkened; they point to such texts as—

"*The imaginations of man are evil from his youth:*" "*In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.*" "*In sin hath my mother conceived me;*" to the mournful yet true picture drawn by St. Paul in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. The brighter gleams which others dwell on, they take to be but lightning flashes, few and far between, passing away in an instant, and which even while they last do but mark more strongly the darkness out of which they burst.

The result of these conflicting opinions is, that the one party think that the work of redemption is confined almost entirely to the averting from man the penalties of his natural corruption—losing sight of his danger and his duties with reference to actual sin and actual holiness, they think that the work is complete and his salvation secure when by God's mercy the merits of Christ's blood are applied to his original sinfulness; that the acts of a man, whether viewed as heathen or Christian, can be nothing but unmixed sin, and that therefore it does not signify whether there is much sin or little; nay, some go so far as to assert that the greater the sin the more glorious the salvation, the more certain the assurance. It need not be said how the spiritual state and destinies of beings who are only too ready to accept any excuse or cloke for sin are affected by teaching which, by holding up one half of Scripture, putting aside and hiding the other half from view, makes sin into almost a means of grace. The other side, losing sight of original sin and its consequences,

think that a man can stand by himself; that he comes before God as a sinner only on account of the actual sins he commits; that he is able to save himself either as a man by his natural powers without Christ, or as a Christian only by accepting His atonement so far as his deeds of actual evil outweigh those of actual good. Some are led to think that they may, as redeemed of Christ, endure the severity of God's judgment in their own name and by their own righteousness.

At first sight it would perhaps seem natural to say that the contrary views of human nature on which these opinions are founded cannot be true together; but if the principle on which these Lectures are grounded is right, it is more correct to say they cannot be true apart; each represents one side of truth, and when combined by comprehensive faith, they convey to the mind the state of man as he is drawn in Scripture, and of course as he is really in life.

It must, I think, be allowed that in Scripture man is represented as fallen, and yet capable of good. The texts on either side to which I have alluded, and others which are familiar to all, prevent our denying the coexistence of these two statements. Let us see how they may be together true.

I do not see how, except by shutting our eyes to the evidence of all history and philosophy, as well as of daily experience, we can deny that as a mere heathen, as a moral, social, and political being, man, in

his state by nature, is capable of so performing his parts and duties of moral, social, and political life as to claim, in a human sense, the name of *righteous*[a]; that there was in the heathen world some knowledge of and practice of good. And this is proved, first, by the universal reprobation attached to some acts which did not directly injure society, for evil cannot be recognised as evil by those to whom good is utterly strange; and secondly, the notions of virtue and vice, the sense of praise and blame, the aims and laws of the legislator, the theories of philosophy, the rules of moralists, the exhortations of poets, all prove the same point of the heathen world in general: while, turning to individuals, I do not see how we can deny that one who had never even heard the name of Christ was capable of acting bravely, kindly, generously, and even, in a certain sense, piously. He might worship and serve God according to the law he had; he might have had a true and loving knowledge of God as far as He may be apprehended in the material world; and where there is any such knowledge of God at all, there, in that same degree, must there be some good: he might be, after a certain fashion, unselfish; he might have impulses and habits, and perform acts which externally differ very little from the fruits of the Spirit, though, viewed internally, they differ most essentially; perhaps in many things his life would bear comparison with the lives of those who call themselves Christian; he had,

[a] On the application of the word *righteous* to man's works, see Lect. V.

whether he listened to them or not, powers, feelings, hopes, cravings, the tendency of which was to lead him from what is utterly low and sensual to that which cannot be called evil, except with reference to the higher rule and standard of good which Christ has revealed.

[Nor can we, I think, suppose that an act of charity (for instance) performed by a heathen is absolutely displeasing to God in the same way in which an act of murder is: not because the supposition is contrary to our notions of God, for I shall not use myself the argument I deny to others; but because the Spirit, though speaking of the whole world as concluded under sin, does nevertheless draw a distinction between one sort of men and the other sort of men, between Abel, for instance, and Cain, between every soul of man, Jew or Gentile, that worketh good, and every soul of man that worketh evil [b].]

But in spite of all these tendencies and powers and feelings, man by nature is so far lost, that he is not capable of faith and turning unto God; nay, the works which he does in the state of nature, shadows and resemblances though they sometimes may be of Christian holiness, have so far the nature of sin, in that they spring from that selfishness and self-will which is naturally engendered in every son of Adam, and whereby Adam's sin is from day to day reproduced. Their best actions are done not with a view to God, but to self in some shape or other—

[b] Rom. ii. 9, 10.

to their happiness, dignity, or pleasure; their highest motive is but a sense of praise and blame, of good or bad desert as referred to self. They have in them nothing of that element which makes the Christian's life acceptable to God, adoption through Christ, and the sanctification of the Holy Ghost; and hence man is, as well in his works as in his being, a child of wrath, inasmuch as his life is only the energy of that nature which the sin of Adam alienated from God: thus too is he very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil; for when the Spirit left him at his fall, self with its passions, the flesh with its lusts, rose up in the place of God, and these were so strong within him, that those who resisted them were thought very prodigies of virtue. And yet not wholly lost, for there yet existed some memories of what he had been, some cravings after escape from what he was; he still had such an appreciation and such a power of good, as springs from its being conformable to reason or agreeable to self-love; and hence we conclude that the heathen man is capable of that lower good which belongs to unassisted nature, but incapable of that true spiritual good which arises from the indwelling and consists in the energies of the Spirit.

And if there be to this some exceptions: if there have even in heathen times and countries been some who had feelings and views above their merely unregenerate nature, these do not disprove the rule, for they are by the hypothesis rare and exceptional cases; and those wise men of old who seem to speak

with a wisdom above their own, may be not unreasonably supposed to have been enlightened from above, to be God's servants in the midst of crooked and perverse generations. It is true also that Scripture tells us of men under the old dispensation who were not outwardly partakers of the Christian covenant, and yet were able to please God, as fully as any of the saints under the covenant of grace; such for instance were Enoch, Noah, Abraham, David, Hezekiah; such too, in his degree, was Cornelius: these, it may be urged by some, were unregenerate men, and yet were capable of works pleasing to God. To this we answer, It is clearly laid down in Scripture, that those who are in the flesh cannot please God, that it is faith in Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit which can take us out of the flesh, and put into our minds spiritual desires, good counsels, and just works, and therefore these men must have prospectively had faith; and the Holy Spirit, which is now poured out to all who seek, was before the coming of Christ vouchsafed to these chosen ones who, though seemingly unregenerate men, were nevertheless counted as sons of the adoption, heirs of the promises.

Thus comprehensive and definite faith does not halt between two opinions, whether man is by nature good or bad, but holds firmly that for some things he has good in him, though of a lower order; and that, on the other hand, not only are there in him a number of evil passions which make him love what is bad, but that for the higher sort of good he is by

nature not only incapacitated, but disinclined: while she gratefully recognises the relics and shadows of good, which kept those men who retained them in a comparatively moral state, yet she recognises too man's absolute need of a higher and better nature, and no less gratefully acknowledges and accepts God's mercy in the restoration through Christ.

So that this is not merely an abstract question; it has a practical bearing on our salvation. The doctrine of the corruption of our nature is the groundwork of our hopes of perfection, for it makes us feel our need of, makes us accept our Saviour; while of those who lose sight thereof, some so far deny Christ as to look upon Him merely as an example, and fancy that their highest religious perfection consists in the development of their natural gifts and powers, it may be after the pattern of Christian virtues, but independent of the motions of that Holy Spirit without Whom Christian virtue is but a name. Others, again, deny Him wholly, and treat His existence and history as a myth, without divine sanction or authority. Their confidence in human nature is such, that they think the spirit of man which is in him, if its flight be but soaring and daring enough, will of itself reach heaven; that self, if devoutly worshipped, will disclose itself as a god; that each individual is, by giving his soul free range, unrestricted by fear of God or man, to develope the Divine particle which is by nature in him, and thereby to place himself above the weaknesses and cares and follies of this life, and in perfect security for the

next, if next there be. According to this philosophy, it is not Christianity, which is by its supernatural powers to raise the whole race, as it spreads wider and wider, and throws its roots deeper and deeper, but the destinies of the world are to be worked out to the fullest consummation by the progressive expansion and concentration of human perfections.

Against these Babel-builders faith points to the inherent corruption of human nature as revealed by God, and illustrated in the pages of history no less than in the facts of daily life. And that this corruption is to be subdued by the self-dependent efforts of the individual soul, no one, whose conscience is true to him, can believe. Men may talk of the pure calm happiness of the triumphant intellect; of the purity and repose of a soul self-possessed in its philosophy; of the elevating visions which rise up from the contemplation of the beautiful and true; of the delights of sympathy, and communion with those whom these visions raise above the cares of ordinary life; but that which is of the flesh is flesh, and he who sows to the flesh must in the end reap corruption. By the side of the philosopher there sits a figure who whispers the word "death" in his ear, and all his visions vanish like a dream; and even while the dream lasts evil mingles with its purest and best. The calm intellect is ruffled by pride; in the self-possessed soul there is the debasing element of self-worship; in the sympathies of kindred souls there is absorbing selfishness, and oftentimes a proud disregard of the laws of God and man; in their

beautiful and true there is but a lower sort of beauty and truth : it is after all but a whitened sepulchre.

Nor is this corruption a thing from which the world may free itself by the progressive advancement of generation after generation. Men may point to the conquests of science, to the stores of knowledge laid up by one generation for the next, and ask what bounds are to be set to this progress; but this progress is rather apparent than real; they cannot point to any one particular in which civilization has affected our inborn nature. When we look at the heart of man, and take away the disguises in which refinement and language have hidden the motions and acts of sin; when we see how actions seemingly different and called by different names do in reality flow from the same fountain of evil, we are obliged to confess that there is very little difference between the philosopher and the savage, between what man is now and what he was two thousand years ago. Human life is not an abstraction which can grow really better or purer, except so far as those who are born into it and live in it are better and purer. It is not that one generation begins where the other left off; it may be so in knowledge, in organisation, in the arts and appliances of life, but it is not so with the secret springs of thought and feeling with which each man is born into the world. These are for the most part the same. Jealousy, the love of power, of self, of pleasure, of money—are not they as rife and strong in our towns, or ports, or schools, as they were when the places where these

stand were occupied by men who knew nothing of civilised life? And what result can be produced by time? If the world were to last millions of years, we have no reason from analogy to suppose that the living soul, which was last born into it, would, by virtue of any moral or intellectual perfection of his forefathers, inherit as his principle of being capacities different in kind from our own, any more than we can conceive that by successive development of the body man would in time arrive at the stature of a giant or the beauty of an angel. Not that I mean to say that in the outward developments of the moral nature, the actual phases of moral life, no improvement can take place; such an assertion would be contrary to the world's history. We can discover a gradual though real improvement in the tone and feeling of society in one generation as compared with another, as the reason discerns and approves more and more of rational good. We can see that there is less of actual evil in the daily lives of men in one time and place as compared with another, just as we see a difference between children brought up in a godly home and those for whom such a home exists not. Man may again from similar though opposite causes sink lower in one age or place than in another; but this is not a difference of nature, but the same nature acted upon somewhat differently by the different circumstances and examples whereby it is developed and moulded; and this has a limit – a man may rise or sink in the scale, but he does but seldom destroy entirely the rational

good which is in him; never can he eradicate the evil; he can neither rise nor sink beyond his proper nature; he can become neither devil nor angel.

Vain, then, are the theories and attempts of those who think that man carries within himself his own perfection, the seeds of a mighty present, a mightier future. Proud dreamers! foolish wisdom! suicidal self-worship! for see how they frustrate the purposes of God for them. He, knowing the secrets of their hearts and the issues thereof, has provided for them a moral growth by having their natural powers clothed upon by the Spirit; real holiness by having their sinfulness and sin washed out by the blood of Christ, their imperfect endeavours after perfection made perfect by being clothed upon with His righteousness. This is man's high destiny—to be set free from the body of this death, to be made partakers of the Divine nature: this is God's purpose for him, at this His counsels aim, towards this His dispensations work; man turns from them and trusts to himself: and what is the end thereof, even at the best? Does he succeed? He may for a time act up to his creed, he may struggle with himself and the evil he cannot but feel to be within and around, he may try to familiarise his soul with what seems to him to be pure and good, but the evil will present itself in spite of him; he may try to fashion his life on unselfish principles, but selfishness will come in some shape or other; he may flatter himself in that he turns from the grosser forms of sin, but he does

not know the various disguises which sin as an enchanter assumes: not the same to the philosopher and the peasant; nor to the man of cold blood, and to him in whose veins passion flows as the very principle of life; not the same in all ages; not the same to the solitary of the desert and to the dweller in cities; but still the same in issue and result. He may fancy that he may be as a good spirit among men, that he can purify and elevate the world; he may enter on the task with as much singleness of aim and honesty of heart as man is capable of, and he may perhaps do something; but it falls far short of his own notions of what man should be, how infinitely short of what God designs him to be! He finds that it is like fighting singlehanded against giants; the world, with its evil is too strong for him; he sinks into dreamy unrealities, a shadowy life, made up of words and theories, or else wraps himself up in an unsympathising communion with a chosen few; he has failed, and knows he has failed, but can devise no remedy. The Christian, on the other hand, knows his weakness and his strength before he begins; feeling the evil of his nature to be too strong to be curbed by human will, already corrupted and betrayed by it, he throws himself on Christ; his own inability is to him a pledge of power from above: out of weakness springs forth strength; out of failure, triumph; out of sin, so that it be not wilful, springs righteousness; out of deserved punishment springs up undeserved reward.

Nor, again, as it seems to me, are they to be heard

who hold the corruption of nature so exclusively as to place the Christian and the man in unmixed and unvarying antagonism; for though it is maintained by faith as a fundamental truth that no degree of moral perfection attainable by man can raise him above the world, no degree of intellectual development translate him to heaven, yet she does not in the practical application of this doctrine confine herself to a one-sided view. She does not think that evil is to be acquiesced in as a necessary condition of our life, or that we are to retire from the duties and cares of that world in which evil reigns. She does not teach men to say to God, 'I have no talent to account for, Thou never gavest me any.' She recognises the natural powers of man as a gift from God: in their proper development and use, she sees something that elevates even the heathen above what is low and sensual, and brings his soul more into harmony with the higher and spiritual things for which God designs him. She does not sympathise with that view which makes it almost a part and duty of religion to let the faculties of the mind and heart be neglected and misused. She sees they have their part and office even in the regenerate man, so that it be in strict subordination to the mysteries, the precepts, the powers of Christ and His Spirit. She sees that reason may be enlightened to discern and realise spiritual things, that desire may become hope, affections deepen into charity. She gives earthly wisdom its due, but does not make it a god or worship it. She holds that the notion of man's real perfection being

the putting on of Christ in no way implies the neglect of the rational man.

Nor does faith oppose progress, provided that it is real and not chimerical; that it does not claim to do what it cannot do, nor hold out false hopes of gathering figs from thorns and grapes from thistles. Faith sees that progress in anything which tends to elevate society by turning man's desires and thoughts from what is merely animal and carnal is, provided it does not deny or usurp religion's place and functions, a progress in, or, at the least, towards religion. She uses the arms and energies arising from such progress in advancing the kingdom of Christ. She holds out to art and science the right hand of fellowship, and bids them God-speed: surely art and science should embrace the offer which faith makes them of rendering their work more certain, more effectual, more enduring.

Man then is by nature at a distance from God, capable only of the lower good which Adam in his foolishness chose for himself and his children in lieu of the higher good in which he was created; and further, he is under the dominion of that evil under which Adam fell by obeying Satan unto disobedience. By God's mercy, however, the comparative restoration of the higher good, and a comparative freedom from evil is offered him, according to a scheme of salvation ordained before he fell. How is he to lay hold of it? And here Christians differ.

And herein, too, faith is comprehensive: she

firmly believes what the Spirit has told her, that *no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him*, but she cannot, on the other side, shut her eyes to the correlative truth that man has something to do in the matter, implied in the numberless exhortations and reproaches addressed in Scripture to those to whom the gospel was preached: for exhortations and reproaches find no place where there is no room for choice and action, no responsibility for acceptance or rejection. She does not believe that a man may safely live in the works of the flesh in the notion that God will surely compel him to come against his will: the call to change of heart, which was the prelude to the gospel, implies that there is a state of heart which is a preparation for its acceptance, and that this change comes not upon the will which has hardened itself against it. She knows that the coming to Christ cannot be done by man, that it is the work of the Spirit, but she gathers from Scripture that the spirit of man must work with the Spirit of God.

And this may be in two ways; first, negatively: man has a power of opposition and refusal, whether this arises from the natural evil of his nature increased by self-indulgence, or is, as with the Jews, a judicially inflicted blindness. Thus Christ came to *His own, and His own received Him not.* Thus in the marriage feast did the guests refuse the invitation of their King, who would have drawn them to His table. Against this power of refusal he may successfully struggle.

Next positively; we have seen that man, lost as

he is, may still have rational yearnings, indistinct and aimless though they be, for something better, a certain dissatisfaction with what he is. Indeed, the very purpose of God in giving the natural man a law, and implanting the motions of conscience discerning between good and evil, was not merely to guide him in life, but to make him long for a better, by giving him the knowledge of sin, as displeasing to God and contrary to his own real happiness. And when this has been increased and improved by a life of such righteousness as is within a heathen's reach, then is his soul in some sort ready to receive the gracious and merciful inspirations of the Holy Spirit, whereby, transmuting the rational into the spiritual, He draws them to Christ, in whom they will find what they have been longing for. We may never forget that, even when the soul is moved to desire something above itself, yet without God's preventing grace it is not so really conscious of the corruption of nature as to desire or even comprehend the real remedy. Grace vouchsafed increases the desire by making sin appear still more sinful, placing it before our eyes not as an outward act, or even as an act of choice alone, but as the natural fruit of the corrupt tree. The will too, weakened by the very inherited and inherent evil from which it longs to escape, is too weak and blind in itself to accept the mercy of God in the shape in which it is offered him : *The natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit*, and therefore would never conceive or understand the promises and purposes of God through Christ, unless God Himself

interpreted them to him by His Spirit: strong desires perhaps were his, but these were impotent of themselves, unless God had helped them. It is as if a man were weary of earth, and God were to open heaven to his view and give him wings to rise thereto; as if a blind man were mourning hopelessly over his blindness, and Christ had given him sight. Where the Holy Spirit is present in power, there the human will is able to receive the gospel; where He is not, there the human will is blind, and halt, and deaf.

And that good works only so far prepare a man for salvation as to imply a vague desire to be saved, may be seen from the fact that not only the "just," or "righteous," those who were waiting for the kingdom of God, such as Simeon or Anna; or those who, according to their light, had sanctified their unregenerate nature by keeping God and His will in view, such as Cornelius; not only were these blessed with ears to hear and eyes to see, but even those who had spent their substance in riotous living, and yet when the strange fame was spread abroad that a Messenger from heaven had come to seek and save such as they were, felt themselves moved by thoughts which had never before occurred to them, by wishes which had never before stirred with them—these too had their wishes confirmed and fulfilled by receiving the will and the power to come to Him Who was to save them.

It seems, then, that we may conclude generally that those who having nothing higher than natural religion yet did try to listen to and live up to this, were

so far in a better condition than those who did not, as to have a certain willingness to be saved, hindered indeed by the lusts of the flesh and their captivity to Satan. The mode too of salvation was indeed still a stumblingblock: but to those who were or are in earnest, these hindrances vanish before preventing grace, and they see spiritual things by the light of the Spirit. *If a man will* (or rather *wishes*) *to keep my commandments, he shall know of my doctrine whether it be of God. To those that received Him, He gave power to become the sons of God.* Those who, in the Jewish or Gentile world, either humbly walking with their God, or obeying His call to repentance, received Christ, and saw in Him a messenger from heaven, those were drawn to Him in His more definite character of a Redeemer and Sacrifice.

But to look at this a little more closely, let us take a man in whom human ability may be supposed to be strongest; give him all the natural perfection and development which may raise him above the lower appetites and grosser forms of evil; let him have as true and practical knowledge of God and his duties as may be gathered from natural religion or his own moral sense,—and such men have been found in nations where the name of Christ has never been heard—so far there would be chords in his soul which would vibrate to the echoes of our Saviour's voice: the news of the Prophet of Nazareth would have some attraction for him: in as much as he had in some sort loved truth, he would not wholly shrink from the light: but how far will his human perfec-

tions lead such a one to the doctrine of the cross, or even to the doctrine of such a Saviour as Christ? how could they recommend to him the notion that his only real perfection, his only real wisdom, his only real virtue, is to be found, not in working out the tendencies and capacities of humanity, not in any surpassing excellence of developed reason or taste, but in sitting at the feet of the lowly Jesus, and learning from Him the alphabet of knowledge, and in being clothed upon with a righteousness not his own? Would not his natural perfections rather lead him to think scorn of that religion which held them so cheap, which contradicted all the principles of his philosophy and the results of his experience, unless the Holy Spirit, having led him to a deeper insight into the realities of things present and to come, had presented the gospel to him in such a shape as he could hardly fail to accept? Thus does the Spirit graciously overrule the inability of human nature.

Next, take a man in whom the inability of the natural man may be supposed to be strongest, short of the case of the reprobate man, whom we shall consider presently; one over whose reason and feelings the genial influences of religion, philosophy, civilisation has never been shed, whose moral sense has from childhood been blunted by familiarity with notions and customs and deeds from which civilised man shrinks. Even in such a man there may be some relics of good; some trace of his belonging morally as well as physically to the same race as the

sages and saints of old. His conscience need not at all times and in all cases be dumb; he may be open to some of the tenderer influences of natural affection, the absence of which is a sign of the reprobate mind, and which, even in its less exalted form, has something in it of good; there may come over him now and then a feeling of self-reproach; a dim shadow of guilt and punishment hanging over him; and when Christ is preached to him as able to deliver him from the body of this death, would there not rise up a voice within him which would say, "Go and be healed?" and if this feeling were not present to him, would he not go on his way without heeding the Saviour, just as a man who is not thirsty passes by the fountain to which others throng? But he would be little able to obey this voice of his soul thus pleading for himself, unless some strength greater than his own were vouchsafed him from on high to overcome the otherwise invincible obstacles which his evil lusts and evil habits would oppose to his laying hold of the offered Saviour.

But besides these two, there is one yet lower than the lowest of them—the man of reprobate mind; in whom natural corruption has been worked out to its fullest and deadliest issues, so that he is neither under the influence of any instincts towards even his lower good, nor of such principles of right and wrong as obtain even in the heathen world; the light that is in him is darkness; his reason approves sin as the law of his being, his heart rejoices in it for its own

sake. On his ears naturally our Saviour's message would fall as music on the ears of the deaf, or light on the eyes of the blind. He would be unable and unwilling to accept salvation, unless by some special manifestation of wrath or mercy the Spirit roused and changed him. And if we look to this character alone, we must say, that man is totally corrupt, without any trace of his original creation, utterly averse to being saved: and, if he is saved at all, it must be by a special miracle of grace, without any even passive cooperation whatever on his part; while in the other two cases, we might in the one be led to mistake the wish of a better life for the will and power to be saved, the desire to have a Saviour for the actual coming to Christ; and in the other, we might confound the absence of the power and will with the entire absence of that impatience of evil, those yearnings towards good, which make a man in some sort ready, though not able or willing, to receive Christ. [And we should be wrong in so doing; for in either of these cases there is, in different degrees, a willingness, or rather a wish more or less vague, to be saved; though, almost coincidently with it, the old man would neutralise and make it ineffectual. In the one, it would be pride of reason, in the other, the lusts of the flesh; so that unless the Holy Spirit interposed to give them that power which by nature they cannot have, the offer of Christ would be made to them in vain.]

In our own age and country indeed this question

is scarcely a practical one, as far as regards the first acceptance of Christ, inasmuch as the boy who as he grows up comes to Christ, and accepts the mysteries and duties of Christianity with his reason and his will, has already in his baptism received the grace of the Spirit for this especial purpose; and as he improves or neglects this gift, as the Holy Spirit is cherished or stifled, the spirit of the man has or has not the desire and the will and the power to comprehend and lay hold on gospel promises and privileges, the doctrines and precepts of the Bible. To him who submits himself to the Spirit, these doctrines and precepts are as living waters ever springing up unto everlasting life, *a savour of life unto life:* to him who does despite to the Spirit, and follows the will of the old man, these mysteries and precepts become, under the influence of his natural corruption, mere formal unrealities, *a savour of death unto death;* he is ever being taught, ever learning, and yet never coming to the knowledge of the truth. Of all miserable sights, there is none much more so, than to hear a deliberately wicked child saying the Catechism or repeating chapters of the Bible. It may possibly be of use to him in after life; at present it seems to me to be a taking God's name in vain.

It is not however only with regard to our first acceptance of the gospel that in consequence of the corruption of our nature we need God's grace, but throughout every stage, every moment of our Christian life. For though we are delivered from

the powers of darkness, though we have with the putting on of Christ received a new principle of spiritual life, yet side by side there still is the old man; the infection of nature yet remains. There is the same struggle between the law of the mind and law of the members, but its issues are reversed: before, the law of the members conquered by virtue of the corruption of nature; now, the law of the mind by virtue of the power of the Spirit. It is not however that having received in addition to our natural being a Divine nature, we are henceforward able to act for ourselves by the goodness and strength of our own reason and feelings; it is not that our heart is so changed that henceforward it naturally, *vi naturæ*, chooses its highest good, not that our feet are so strong that we can walk by ourselves, that our reason is so clear that we can see with our own eyes; we need fresh and continual supplies of grace from the Holy Spirit, to strengthen, purify, enlighten us from day to day and hour to hour.

On the other hand, we are so far restored by the indwelling of the Spirit, as to be capable of and bound to a spiritual life in faith and good works. We are not to be content with continuing in sin, in the notion that sin is the ordained life of man, or that the more we sin the more will grace abound; nor to fancy that the proper actions of the natural man are in themselves higher or better than they were before, so as to become the highest life of the Christian; they are so only so far higher as the Spirit dwells in and works in them,

and the Spirit leads us to a life far above the highest and best of the heathen. We are to be perfect not as man is perfect, for here love admits hatred to sit beside her; but we are to be perfect as God is perfect, not so much in degree as in kind. It is true that when our natural tendencies towards mere human good are under the guiding influence of the Spirit, our wills, not by virtue of any inherent goodness or holiness of their own, but by virtue of that indwelling grace, do move in a new and heavenly direction. It is true that our reason, desires, affections may have an habitual, though not wholly unopposed, and therefore not sinless, impulse towards that spiritual good in Christ to which the natural man is a stranger; but these habits, this second nature as it were, are not formed by those faculties having by repeated energies glided into powers of good, but they are merely the results and energies of the expansive power of that grace which has been at work in us and on us. We are not so wholly restored as the Romanists hold, to be able to attain to spotless, sinless perfection, not yet, as Wesley says[a], to be unable to sin, but we are so far restored as not to be unable to do anything but sin. We are still obliged to confess ourselves miserable sinners, and to say there is no health in us; we are still so far gone from original righteousness, that evil lusts and tempers, which the original creation knew not, abide in us and burst out into choice and action; but still those natural instincts whence man's natural good springs are not to

[a] See Magee's Atonement, vol. i. p. 163.

be quenched, but having been so far set free as to be able to accept and follow the desires and counsels which come from God, are to be yielded as servants of God, His instruments of good, as before they were servants of Satan, his instruments of iniquity. Those who say we are so wholly restored in baptism as to be able wholly to avoid sin, make shipwreck of their faith on the quicksand of self-merit. Those who say that we are so wholly restored by being justified by Christ as not to be able to sin, have to take heed lest they fall into spiritual pride, and endanger the possession of that grace which is given only to the humble. Those who say that we need no restoration, will find in the end that their natural powers will not, if the Bible be true, avail them. Those who say we are not restored at all, are apt to lay their actual sins to the account of their original sin, and to take no care to rid themselves of those habits which they think will be atoned for by Christ, or to form that real holiness without which no man can be saved. They are apt to forget that Christ came not only to bear their sins, but also *to purify to Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works—to purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

Nor, again, is there any indefiniteness here, except what arises from taking only one side of the truth. The doctrine of the corruption of man, his sinfulness in God's sight, his inability to help himself or wholly to avoid sin, stands out as boldly in the comprehensive faith of our Church as it

does to him who makes it the sum and substance of Christian life. The doctrine that the regenerate Christian is able to do good works acceptable unto God, that the natural powers of man, when directed and guided by the indwelling Spirit, have something to do in that which Christ sets before us as our work in life, is not less firmly and practically held by our Church than it is by those who wrest it to the heresy of human merit, and the essential holiness and ability of a Christian man. The man of comprehensive faith feels deeply his own corruption, but he does not make it an excuse for sinning, or a substitute for repentance: he feels that he is a sinner, saved by Christ, as a brand from the burning, but he feels likewise that, if he would in the end be saved, he must conquer sin; he feels deeply and strongly too his call unto good works; feels within him strongly his liberty to avoid sin and to choose good, and his choice is made; but he knows whence his power comes: he feels deeply his proneness to sin, his duty to turn from it, but he knows too in whose strength his weakness is made strong, with what arms he must fight against his spiritual foes. He feels bound to bend all his natural capacities to good, but he knows Who alone can enable him to do it. He knows too that his best works cannot endure the severity of God's judgment; he knows that he must serve God, but he knows too that his service must be unprofitable. He listens to the suggestions of his natural love, benevolence, piety, bravery within, shame, ho-

nour, praise, blame without; to the promptings and warnings of his natural conscience, knowing they now speak to him with a higher authority than his own; he turns from his natural evil—lusts of the flesh, impulses of anger, revenge, jealousy, covetousness and the like, knowing that God will make a way for him to escape, if he will follow His will and use His grace; but in his aspirations and endeavours after holiness, in the hour of temptation or of doubt such a one takes not counsel of his reason alone; places not his reliance on any resolutions of his own human will; takes not his stand on his own powers of resistance, but falls on his knees and seeks fresh supplies of grace, without which he knows that his counsels, his will, his resolutions, will pass away as the morning dew before the mid-day sun; with which he knows his counsels will be made sure, his will determined, his resolutions effectual; *Lord, save me, or I perish,* is the watchword of his vigil, the battle cry of his warfare. In all his musings on his spiritual progress, in all his endeavours to grow in faith, he looks not to his own wisdom, or desires, or love of God, but holding his reason ready to believe, his desires and his love ready to obey, he looks up to the cross, with the words, *Lord, what must I do to be saved?*

# LECTURE IV.

Acts xvi. part of 30th verse.

*What must I do to be saved?*

THE question which the gaoler of Philippi thus earnestly put to his prisoners is the first sign of a change of heart in those to whom Christ has effectually presented Himself as able to deliver them from the body of this death: and though the answer to it contains the sum and substance of practical religion, yet it is a question which a man very seldom puts to himself; for it is one of the disadvantages of living in a Christian community, and in the midst of Christian ordinances, that we are apt to take it for granted that we are in the way of salvation, and therefore care not really to inquire what we must do to be saved. It is a question indeed which is frequently asked in tones of deepest agony at the last, when a man who has all his life long either cared nothing for his salvation or taken it for granted, finds the vanities of this world passing away, and the realities of the next forcing themselves upon his soul with more and more distinctness: and

therefore it is a question which every man would do well to examine into while he is yet able to realise in his life the answer which the Bible gives him; and besides this practical bearing, it is a question which must be of the utmost importance in any inquiry into the nature and extent of Christian faith; because to enable us to answer it truly is the proper object of the teaching of the Apostles, of the preaching and ministrations of the Church in all ages—it is this question which theologians and pastors have alike to solve.

There are not wanting those who make this grave matter of very little moment, by holding what they call the universality of salvation: by which is meant, that as Christ died for all men, all men will be saved. Indeed it would seem that this opinion is held by many who do not openly profess it, if we listen to the way in which it is generally assumed that every one who departs this life passes at once and without doubt to heaven. It may possibly be from charity or sympathy that men thus follow their dead in hope; but if this hope is real, it must, I think, imply that Scripture speaks of all men as finally saved by Christ.

Others again restrict the possibility of salvation to a chosen few, and contend that for these alone the sacrifice of Christ is efficacious. And as each party adduce Scripture to support their respective positions, it is part of the scheme of these Lectures to see what is the whole truth which these respective tenets bring before us in parts.

There are undoubtedly texts which speak of all mankind as in some way or other benefited by Christ's death. Such for instance are, *As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*[a]. *As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life*[b]. In both these passages the results of Adam's fall and the results of Christ's triumph are represented as coextensive. So again He is said to have *tasted death for every man*[c], and to have given *Himself a ransom for all*[d]. While in many other passages the form of expression evidently limits the benefits of His sufferings to those who believe.

That Christ died for all mankind may be interpreted to mean that the sacrifice of Christ will be available to all who in heart and soul turn to Him: or again, it may mean that salvation is now within the grasp of all men, if they only according to God's will accept it. But I am inclined to think that this is more definitely and really expressed by saying, that by the death of Christ the whole human race was in part at least relieved from the spiritual curse which Adam's disobedience brought upon it, and was placed in a new relation to God. I confess, I cannot read (for instance) of the world having been reconciled to God[e] through Christ, without gathering

[a] 1 Cor. xv. 22. [b] Rom. v. 18. [c] Heb. ii. 9.

[d] 1 Tim. ii. 6. Cf. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, where mention of the death of Christ for all is immediately followed by a limitation to those who live unto Him. So again in 1 Tim. iv. 10.

[e] 2 Cor. v. 19. Cf. Col. i. 20.

from it something more than the all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, or the mere universal possibility of salvation, though of course these must be included in whatever interpretation we give to such passages: it seems to me that it is not merely a possible but an actual benefit which is spoken of as vouchsafed to the world through Christ. And we may find such a benefit in the fact which is revealed to us in Scripture, that Christ's death abolished so much of the consequences of Adam's sin as consisted in all the world, save the Jews, being excluded from the highest love of God and the highest energies of spiritual life. Before our Saviour's death mankind, as a race, were, with the exception of the chosen people, enemies of God[f], aliens to the covenant of the promises—removed from all spiritual intercourse with Him. God did not reveal Himself to them in His personal relations; He was the Lord of heaven and earth and sky, summer and winter, seed time and harvest; but He was not the Father, the Guide, the Pattern of life. They were left to grope their way in the world, to feel after God with no better guide than the instincts of their souls, and the witness which He gave them of Himself in the things which He had created, and in the workings of His providence. God's spiritual gifts were out of their reach—no rules for life save the few sparks which they might strike from their own hearts—no form or ceremonies of religion whereby they might approach God. Their sacrifices had no meaning, nay, so small

[f] Rom. v. 10.

was their knowledge of the true God, that they were often offered to devils. They might be thirsty, but no one said, "Come to the fountains"—they might be hungry, but no manna of consolation fell to them from heaven — no voice of prophecy to lead the longing eye of hope over the present degradation to the future deliverance. The whole creation was groaning and travailing till Christ came to do for the whole world what the call of Abraham and the gift of the law had done for the Jews. And then *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself*[g]. The middle wall of partition was broken down—the enmity was abolished[h]. Mankind fell in Adam—mankind rises in Christ—and by His death for all men, all men, being so far reconciled to God, became friends instead of enemies; no longer strangers and aliens, but capable of becoming fellow citizens with the saints and of the blessed household of God; capable of admission to as close communion and intimate relations with God as the elect people themselves. God disclosed Himself no longer only in the sacrifices and oracles of the law—not only in Jerusalem—but in Christ—in all the world. The life and immortality which they had dimly guessed at were brought to light, and made as much realities and certainties as the life which now is. God was henceforth the God of the Gentiles as He had been of the Jews. They were the objects of His loving will[i]. Thus in

[g] 2 Cor. v. 19. [h] Eph. ii. 14, 15.
[i] 2 Pet. iii. 9.

Abraham's seed were all the nations of the earth blessed. Thus did they who sat in darkness see a great light; thus did Christ become a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of His people Israel. And as a result of mankind being so far released from the curse of Adam's guilt as no longer to be looked upon as enemies, the Holy Spirit was poured out on all flesh[k], so that He was within the sphere of their prayers and wishes. They might by His help become that which they could not become before, His chosen people[l]. The apostles' prophetic office was addressed to them as much as to the Jews[m], while it is observable, that previous to the descent of the Holy Spirit the revelation was confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The message of salvation which was now to be preached throughout all the world[n] was a real message, a real offer to them, because they could now by the help of the Holy Spirit accept it[o]. And thus did Christ die for all men; firstly, because His love was not confined to this or that portion of the human race, but shone as widely as the sun itself; secondly, because the virtue of His death was so great that it sufficed for all the wickedness of all mankind; thirdly, because He placed them in a new relation to God; and lastly, because by His death He procured for them the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that it was possible for any one by His grace to accept

[k] Acts ii. 17, and x. 45. [l] Eph. iii. 6.
[m] Rom. iii. 29, 30. 2 Tim. i. 11. Rom. x. 12. Acts xxvi. 17, 18.
[n] Luke xxiv. 47. [o] Acts xi. 18. See also Acts xvi. 14.

the salvation unto everlasting life. Thus is the world saved through Christ.

Nor does the interpretation which makes it to mean that all might be saved if they came to Christ, really differ from that which makes it refer to the outpouring of the Spirit; for we have seen that no one without the Holy Spirit can come to Him: and therefore the universal possibility of salvation and the universal gift of the Spirit are in reality different ways of looking at the same result, except that the former expresses only a possible, the latter an actual, benefit resulting to all mankind from the death of Christ; the actual though not complete reconciliation of the world.

Comprehensive faith then takes no narrow view of the purpose of God in sending His Son into the world; she believes that it was and is for all men; and this not only from any mere abstract notions of what God's love must do; [we rejoice indeed when we find that Scripture confirms and recognises those instinctive notions of the human heart which look upon God's love as universal. For there certainly is an instinct, though possibly a false one, which makes one shrink from the doctrine of God's love working only for a few as contrary to the view of that love which we get alike from nature and from grace: who can look upon the glorious sun, the blessings of light, air, strength, reason, vouchsafed to all mankind, who can read of the rain coming on the just and unjust, and not feel that this love can neither be partial nor sparing? but still it is not on these

that we rest our belief. In all revelations of God's nature and will we know that those instincts of natural religion which are revelations in matters of duty cannot be relied upon:] it is not that all men have the same abstract claim, that God would be unjust if He gave to one what He denies to another; we know that the creature may not thus argue with the Creator; the clay must not thus reply to the potter; that the Gentile had no right to complain of Jews being admitted while he himself was shut out: but we rest on the Scripture witness that Christ died for all; we magnify God for His mercy for all mankind, and call upon all the ends of the earth to join with grateful hearts in praising His redeeming love, as set forth in Scripture.

And yet again the same Scripture compels us to fix our eyes in silent sadness on that smaller body for whom alone Christ's sacrifice is in the highest sense and most proper results effectual; not for any lack of God's love towards the many, but from their blindness and perversity: on those few who for His sake and through His sufferings are sanctified in this life, and will be placed on His right hand in the day of judgment: while of the world at large, great as are the blessings which He procured for them, it will, inasmuch as they have rejected God's message, but increase their condemnation: and so, surely, many of God's natural gifts are created for and offered to all, and yet practically exist only for some. And we can find the interpretation of this limitation of God's universal mercy in the indolence, and carelessness, and worldliness of mankind; in the

spiritual state of heathendom as well as Christendom. Even while we believe that it was for all that Christ died, we cannot but see that there are thousands upon thousands who have never laid hold on the hope which springs from, or rather is in Christ; thousands upon thousands who have never heard of His name; to whom those mysteries of God revealed, Christ crucified, the Holy Ghost poured out, which are to us as household words, are utterly unknown. And were it safe for faith to pass the bounds which God has marked out for her, and to speculate on the possible future of the myriads to whom from age to age the Gospel has never been preached, we could scarcely say "nay" to a pious hope, or even a pious belief, that even these having been so far reconciled by Him may in Him likewise find a Saviour; that He will be to them, as to us, the Lamb which taketh away their sins; to them, as to us, wisdom, and sanctification, and righteousness, and redemption. Who shall venture to say that God turns his face from these to save whom Christ died? that His eye sees not their trials? that His ears are closed to their prayers? Who shall say that the life of the savage, ignorant and perhaps superstitious though it may be, is not acceptable unto God through Christ? or when one in the solitude of his desert, with no other temple than those mountains on which our Saviour was wont to commune with His Father, lifts up his heart to God in rude thanksgiving for the blessings of his natural life, or for preservation from some danger, or some special blessing vouchsafed to him or his, who shall say

that Christ does not present this outpouring before the Christian throne of grace? who shall say, when he prays God to pardon some sin which even his uninformed moral sense has pointed out to him, that these sighings of a contrite heart are but wasted on the desert air? When a sinner, by some mysterious providence, which men call chance, is moved to leave his sin, and to be as righteous as he may be, who shall deny, not indeed that he, but that Christ, will save his soul alive? Who shall say that the pulses of human love in any breast are unmarked by Him without whose knowledge not a sparrow falls to the ground? When one in his forest hut, or amid the busier scenes of a heathen town, looks on mankind with a loving eye; cherishes the wife of his bosom, the children of his flesh, the sick or needy, with an affection, only less deep than that of the best and holiest of Christians, because it lacks the Divine element of Christian love, the love of Christ, who shall say that he is not owned by Him, even though he knows Him not? When the ruler of an heathen nation observes right and judgment, defends the cause of the fatherless and widow, sees that such as are in need and necessity have right; who shall say that he will not be placed on the right hand in the day of judgment, when those professing Christians who have sacrificed thousands and thousands to their ambition or pride or selfishness will be cast out? When a heathen suffers for what he believes to be, and even, in its degree, is righteousness' sake; or when he bears bravely and patiently the sorrows or evils which

God has pleased to send him, who shall say that his sufferings do not in Christ's eye take the shape of the cross? who shall say that his soul is not sustained and comforted by the Holy Spirit, whose motions he thus unwittingly obeys? who shall deny that he, living up to the light which he hath, will be judged by that light, and not by the light which he hath not? who shall deny that he will, not for his own righteousness, but by Christ's death and for His merits, be numbered with the saints? And surely the same may be said of and hoped for those who even in Christendom itself are ignorantly in deadly error, not by wilful rejection of the truth, but rather by circumstances of their birth, or by the cunning of designing teachers, whose spiritual dominion is more or less founded on the spiritual ignorance of the people.

But it may be said, If so, what is the need of preaching the Gospel to the heathen? what advantage hath the Christian? Much every way. Because to them are committed the oracles of God; because they enjoy that soul-stirring knowledge; those grace-giving dispensations which the heathen has not; that stream which to the heathen creates an oasis here and there, gladdens the whole of Christendom. It is still true that the Gentiles need a preacher to bring to their knowledge those counsels of God which are working invisibly for them. Supposing our wishes and hopes to be true, that the (humanly speaking) good heathen will be owned by Christ, still how few in each nation are these compared with the number that might have

been turned unto God, had the pure Bible light shone upon them; had their hearts been moved by the actual preaching of the Gospel; by a deep sense of their sin, and of their need of a Saviour; by the wonderful history of God's love and Christ's sufferings; by certain hope of forgiveness and salvation; by the dispensations of the Holy Spirit in His Church; in short, by all that living word which we know has the power of moving men's souls and turning them to God. But, after all, these thoughts, like all other speculations on God's counsels and man's future, which are not directly revealed, savour too much of the question, *Are there few saved?* Suffice it for us to know, that we and those with whom our lot is cast have been called, and that it is part of our calling to spread that knowledge, and to repeat that calling, which we ourselves have received. We cannot however turn from these myriads of immortal souls without a prayer that God would of his infinite mercy so mould their hearts by the secret agencies of His Holy Spirit that they may work out their salvation in Christ, as we in our light, so they in their darkness: not without a prayer too that our hearts may be effectually moved to minister to them of those spiritual blessings to which (humanly speaking) they have as good a right as ourselves, seeing that we are all sinners in the sight of God, equally in need of a Saviour.

But when we turn our eyes from the heathen to the civilised world lying in the mid-day light of the Gospel, and see how that world is occupied with it-

self, careless of Christianity, as if it were still a heathen world; how it is still fast bound in the misery and sin of the flesh, still doing the works and receiving the wages of evil; what a fearful significance is given to texts of Scripture which speak of Christ's sacrifice as available only for a few; such as, *Many are called, but few are chosen.* Look at the actual facts of the Christian world. Many are called to an actual knowledge of Christ; many do know Him, have known Him from childhood; think of Him, speak of Him as their Redeemer. Few are working out their salvation; few are living up to the doctrines they profess, to the mysteries they receive, to the love which they express in words. No barren question this, no idle speculation; it is the serious lesson suggested by our Saviour's practical answer, *Strive to enter in.* See every where new forms of error, some of them even repulsive to reason and morality, establishing themselves on some negation or perversion of God's truth, and assuming to themselves the name and form and office of churches, leading men away from Christ even while they profess to lead them to Him. See many men waxing weary of religious differences, and learning to believe nothing. See men persuading themselves that the broad road is the narrow way. See social evils every where defying faith to remove them—every where declaimed against, every where submitted to; the world, and the principles and fashions of the world, every where triumphant. Walk through our streets, and see, not the cheerful face and light heart of industry and piety,

but covetousness rushing about with wild and disordered step See vice in the very light of day proclaiming herself tolerated, and even welcomed in a Christian city. Go into our villages and hear deadly sins spoken of as trifling occurrences; watch shame fading away from the fresh countenances of the young, and shamelessness taking its place. What clergyman is there who could not in his own ministrations find the meaning of the words, *Many are called, but few are chosen?* See our schools; those nurseries and mimicries of after-life, and mark there how a generous sense of duty to God for Christ's sake; how the pious lessons of Christian faith and duty, the noble principles of Christian honour, are sapped and destroyed by temptation, or ridicule, or example. Take even this very place, where religion and learning are designed to go hand and hand in forming minds according to the image of God by the power of grace; see the numberless opportunities and means of growing in grace—the numberless pious influences, past and present, by which we are surrounded:—it were needless for me to point out to you the things which, even in this place, furnish us with a commentary on the words, *Many are called, but few are chosen.* No idle question, then, no barren speculation—but one fraught with the deepest interest to ourselves, and the deepest results to us as a Church and nation—one which strikes harshly on many a chord of anxious thought in all who care for their own or their brethren's salvation. To the mere theologian, indeed, it is a topic which can be handled as coolly as any abstract point of theo-

logy or morals; but by him on whom the Bible has done its work it cannot be approached without feelings of the deepest anxiety, like that of a city which is hanging on the word of the physician, who is to say whether the plague is among them or not.

And yet, even when we fix our eyes sadly on the few who are in the narrow way, we cannot but see, with deep gratitude to God, that even the many who in the civilised world practically refuse their calling are somewhat benefited by Christ. What has for such an one placed the possibility of salvation, even yet within his reach? what has ordained the means of grace and the word of God, which from time to time thrust themselves on him? what the possibility of repentance, the efficacy of repentance, if he repents, but the sacrifice of Christ? through whom is it that, if he has wandered, he may yet return; and if he does, he will be accepted? What has done all this for him but the death of Christ on the cross for all mankind? Whence does consolation spring up in the heart of a mother who is sighing over the wasted youth, the abused talents, the despised grace, the unchristian life of a wayward son, but from the knowledge that Christ died to save him; from the trust that He will yet so order his way that he may not perish for whom Christ died?

The question of predestination will be considered presently; but though it is suggested by the point immediately before us, yet it has no direct bearing upon it; for whether the few chosen are predestinate or no, it is equally true that Christ's sacrifice, offered for all the world, and bringing some spiritual bless-

ings to all, will in the end be practically confined to comparatively few; equally true that He died for all, and yet only for some[p]. Each truth may and has been used as a source of pure contemplation, as well as a practical lesson by that faith which takes in the whole counsel of God—may be, and has been, and is, a source of error to those who take each by itself as if it were the whole.

And comprehensive faith, as a necessary consequence of her acceptance of both, shrinks from the exaggeration of each—on the one hand, from that misuse of Scripture language and misconception of God's purpose[q], which would restrict Christ's death, by an absolute decree of the Almighty, to a chosen few, without any regard to human conduct; shutting out those whose hearts and lives bear witness to their desire to be saved; making God turn a deaf ear to the sighings and groanings of their contrite and believing heart, unless they be among that chosen few; while those who are, or rather who suppose themselves to be, of this chosen number, may go on in reckless wickedness, relying on their natural sinfulness as an excuse for sin, confident that their sins are pardoned, and themselves accepted in Christ.

Comprehensive faith, too, on the other hand, turns from the presumptuous philanthropy which ventures to extend the sacrifice of Christ to all; even to those who are walking not after the Spirit, but after the flesh; and even to those who rely and trust in them-

[p] See 1 Tim. iv. 10.

[q] See Acts xvii. 30. 1 Tim. ii. 4.

selves, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy, or at the least a needless thing.

Nor does the doctrine that Christ died for all men give authority to the notion, which either tacitly or openly has obtained very commonly in the religious so called liberality of the day, that it matters not what a man's creed is, provided he is living up to the convictions of his own reason and heart, and that his life be pure and holy. We have seen in the last Lecture that the terms *pure and holy* can only be applied to the life of a natural man in a lower and secondary sense, because there is nothing better or holier within his reach; and therefore those who hold this notion are begging the question when they assume that the life of any man who cannot or will not believe in the truth when set before him can be pure and holy; for surely the power of submitting the reason to the word, and the practical submission thereof, is an element and a test of that spiritual state which is acceptable to God through Christ. And such texts as *Every one that worketh righteousness is accepted of Him*, do not prove the point in question. Even in the case of the heathen these words may hold good only in the sense in which they were applied to Cornelius; in respect of his capacity for admission to Christian privileges, rather than of being saved where those privileges are not given; but still it may be true, as we have seen above, of the ignorant heathen, (God grant that it may be so,) that he will be saved, not by the powerless creed which he professes, but by the Divine application of Christ's sacrifice, if he perform according to his

knowledge and ability those conditions of the Christian covenant which are necessary for the Christian; faith readily and gladly confesses that this would only be in analogy with the general known purposes and will of God towards reconciled man: but this evidently is a very different case from that of the man who, living in a Christian country, in the full light of the Gospel, adds to the ignorance of Christ, which he has in common with the heathen, that from which the heathen is free, the positive rejection or neglect of Him through pride of intellect and love of self; even though that very pride of intellect and love of self may keep him from the grosser forms of sin, or urge him to recognised acts of holiness. I confess it seems clear to me that it is both logically and theologically wrong to argue from the possible salvation of the ignorant heathen to the certain safety of the obstinate infidel.

But while the Church can find in human conduct as we see it in the world, a sufficient explanation of the doctrine contained in the words, *many are called, but few are chosen*, without either limiting or extending God's mercy otherwise than it is set forth in Holy Writ; yet she is not blind to the fact, that the doctrine of predestination or preordaining in God's counsels, whether it is viewed as a result of the arbitrary will of the Omnipotent, or as the foreknowledge of the Omniscient, is stated in Scripture in terms which it is impossible to explain away. Nor need we shrink from the question, or approach it in any feeling of fear, lest the real happiness of

mankind, or real practical holiness, can be injured by the receiving it, and teaching it as God has given it us: we are certain that whatever God has given us is designed for the spiritual good, not of a few, but of the whole world; and therefore we may search out this question in the full conviction that the doctrine will be found to be life-giving—the danger is, lest it be allowed to overthrow or overshadow other truths, which in their turn and place are equally parts of God's truth, equally portions of the bread which cometh down from heaven.

The doctrine itself is indeed but sketched in dim and mysterious outlines[r], such as we might expect in a subject of such profound mystery; neither is it possible for man, either by random guesses or by any philosophical anatomy of abstract intelligences, to fill up the outline thus left unfinished, of course for some wise end, by the Spirit of God—God's will is our wisdom—if we shut our eyes to what He tells us, we are foolishly losing something which He designed for our good—if we define where He has not defined, or speak where He is silent, then are we equally frustrating and preventing His wise and merciful designs towards us.

It seems to me to be agreeable to the general analogies of Scripture to look upon the doctrine to have been thus mysteriously set forth rather to exalt the glory of God in our salvation[s], than to give any practical guidance to men; though of course it may be used for this purpose, provided that the matter be handled as it is in Scripture.

[r] See Eph. i 9. [s] Eph. i. 5. 6.

It was meant to show, or at all events it may be viewed as showing, that the whole scheme and work of our redemption in its design and execution, in its principles and details, in all its relations, past, present, or future, were at once comprehended, designed, ordained, as it were, by a single glance, a single act of the will (to use human expressions) of Him, for whom time has no existence; to whom what is, humanly speaking, undone is as if it were done; things that are not, as if they were; whose counsels, though they seem in execution to spread over generation after generation, and to be worked out by a long succession of men and events, did nevertheless spring into actual being at once, perfect, and complete, designed and accomplished: and yet are continually sustained and developed throughout all ages by the Almighty power. Nor is this a mere fanciful speculation: we are expressly told, that to God *one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*[t]—and of course this is but a human way of putting before us the great fact that time belongs to earth, and not to heaven; to man, and not to God—that it is an accident of human existence. It has always seemed to me that a great truth was embodied in that fanciful tale of the East, wherein we read of a king who merely dipped his head into water and took it out again in a single moment of time, and yet in that space had gone through a strange variety of adventures for many years.

[t] 2 Pet. iii. 8.

At all events, whatever may have been God's purpose in revealing it, man's part is to receive it in reverent contemplation, as a subject wherein God has been pleased to allow him a slight glance of His Omnipotence and Omniscience; not as a subject for curious speculation, which can end in nothing but increasing the difficulties of the subject, by judging of it on human experience and principles; far less was it designed to be made by theological dogmatism the basis of a whole system of religion, to which all other truths were, if necessary, to be sacrificed. And as to the point alluded to above, whether this predestination is a result of the arbitrary will or of the absolute foreknowledge of God, it seems to me to be one of those things which will not be solved to us till we *know even as we are known*. It is in vain for us to attempt to balance one Divine energy against another, even by the aid of the most successful results of metaphysical researches. Who shall distinguish between the will and the knowledge of such a Being as God? who shall say where one begins or the other ends? who shall say that they are not identical, even though they present themselves to human comprehension as distinct and divisible?

Be this however as it may, it does not directly affect our actions, or give any direct answer to the question, *What must we do to be saved?* for it is clear from Scripture, that however certain the doctrine of predestination may be, yet in some way or other, incomprehensible perhaps to us, it does not interfere

with the free agency and consequent responsibility of man; for if it be held to the contrary, that man is so predestinated that his spiritual present and future is in no way affected by his own choice or actions, then no small portion of Scripture is made of no meaning. It may perhaps be true that practical exhortations to live worthily of our Christian vocation, as a matter of propriety, might still find place, even supposing that our destiny were not affected thereby; but what becomes of all exhortations and directions to which hope and fear are attached as motives? All passages wherein exertion, or repentance, or holiness, are spoken of as necessary for one who would be saved; all calls to repentance in order to salvation; all revelations of a future judgment, of rewarding men hereafter according to their works here, are mere forms and pretences. The apostolic writers cannot have been inspired by the Spirit, if that to which they give the prominent place in Scripture is a mere delusion; and if they were not inspired, the doctrine of predestination has no ground to stand upon. It would be endless to go through the confusion and absurdity which a one-sided view on this question casts upon Scripture. If certain men are saved whatever they do, the answer to the question, *What must we do to be saved?* should have been, not *Repent and be baptized*, but "Do nothing—you are either saved already, or you never can be saved." What sort of exhortation is it to say, "Do this which you cannot do?" "Take care to keep that which you cannot lose?" "Seek

for that which you already have?" "Seek for that which you can never find?" "Strive to enter in where your striving can make no difference one way or the other?" The two doctrines of predestination and free will must either both be true together, (which is the position I am contending for,) or one must be false; and there cannot, I think, be any doubt that the passages which testify to our hopes of salvation being affected by our choice and conduct are more numerous, direct, and clear, than those which favour predestination: if either is to be explained away (which God forbid), it certainly cannot be the responsibility of man.

Again, the promises of God must of course be coextensive with his predestinated will, whatever this may be; and these promises are, in almost every case, made expressly to depend on the performance of certain conditions by those to whom they are given: whence it is clear, that regard to human conduct is not incompatible with predestination; otherwise the promises, which are the expression thereof, would be absolute and unconditional, not contingent and conditional.

Nor, on the other hand, can we fail to give some definite value and reality to the passages which are relied on in proof of this doctrine. It is true that some of them may be considered as expressing only a national, and not a personal appointment to or exclusion from spiritual privileges, as the argument in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, founded on the history of Esau and Jacob[u]; or as

[u] See also Acts ii. 39.

generally signifying God's supreme prerogative to do what He thought best with His creatures, such as the passage in the same chapter, *He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.* But still there remain a sufficient number of passages[x] in which men are spoken of as definitely and personally appointed or preordained to life eternal, to justify our Church in giving this doctrine a place among the revealed truths of God's word; especially as she takes care to premise that these preordained counsels are secret to us, and depend, in some sort or other, on the further gift of grace to those who are the objects of them; and we know that the gift of grace by God, and the acceptance thereof by man, does depend on the state of the soul: God, for instance, we are told, *resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble;* and this may be the way in which men may frustrate or fulfil the merciful purposes of God for them: for we must not forget that all human holiness arises from the submission of our wills to the grace of God, and that resistance to that grace is the refusal of, or the falling away from, that spiritual state of acceptance, wherein we are to make our *calling and election sure.* That the human will can thus withstand the grace of God, is clear from the fact, that the Jews are spoken of as having *rejected the counsel of God against themselves*[y]. Wherefore, when we read in Scripture of men being preordained or appointed

[x] Acts ii. 47. xiii. 48. 2 Thess. ii. 13.

[y] Luke vii. 30. Acts xiii. 46.

for the wrath of God[z], though our hearts may well sink within us, yet surely may they draw comfort from the conviction which Scripture likewise gives us, that this terrible sentence is not pronounced, except we by our want of lively obedient faith bring it on ourselves. There is comfort in the thought, that we perish not except with the consent and agency of our own wills; there is fear also when we reflect how readily and how often those wills choose the evil and refuse the good.

Nor does it in any way solve the difficulty, to say that man is not predestinated to everlasting life, or everlasting punishment, without any respect had to his holiness or his wickedness; but that the one sort are predestinated to be wicked, to prefer darkness to light, evil to good, while the others are preordained to be holy; for the Jews, on whom this spiritual blindness is represented as falling by God's will, were once confessedly the beloved people of God[a], the elect heirs of the promise; so much so that the offer of salvation was not made to the Gentiles till the Jews had refused to retain their former preordained privilege of being the witnesses and messengers of God's truth to the surrounding world; and they were brought to this state of rejection in consequence of their own neglect of their inheritance, and the abuse of the privileges which as heirs they enjoyed. St. Paul, too, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, traces the downward progress of the Gentile world, which ended in their being given

[z] 1 Pet. ii. 8. Jude 4. [a] Deut. vii. 6.

over to a reprobate mind, as proceeding from the choice of men, and not from the will of God, except as a consequence of that choice[b], and rather against the lights and aids from without and within, which His will had provided for them; this shows that man neither begins nor proceeds in wickedness without his own consent and agency. Hence no one (such is the weakness of man) is so holy, that he may without doubt assure himself that he is predestinated to final salvation; for he that thinketh he standeth has most cause to fear lest he fall; no one (so great is the mercy of God and the power of grace), no one who has one spark of the Spirit yet unquenched, one yearning after forgiveness, need fear that he is by any Divine decree excluded from the possibility of repentance[c]. Our Church does but embody the sense, not of this or that text alone, but of all Scripture, when she says, that God "desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live."

Nor is there any greater inconsistency between the predestinate counsels of God and the free agency of man than there is between those passages of Scripture which declare God's purposes to be fixed and unchangeable—His gifts without repentance or shadow of turning—and those passages which assign to prayer the power of turning away God's wrath or winning God's favour for nations and individuals; or those passages which speak of promises

[b] Rom. i. 26. *For this cause*, &c.

[c] James iv. 8. 2 Pet. iii. 9.

and privileges being withdrawn from some persons and transferred to others—*I will call them my people which were not my people, and her beloved which was not beloved*[d]. God's promises are doubtless without repentance; there is in Him no shadow of turning: He is ever the same: He does not withdraw His gifts from men, but men reject them, and sometimes sin themselves into a state past the possibility of receiving them; and then of course His promises, though living and unchanged in themselves, are a dead letter to such men. Thus prayer is effectual as being part of the act of seeking after and receiving something which we do not know whether it is God's pleasure to give us, but which we shall surely receive if it is His pleasure. Lack of prayer argues either a lack of the wish to have God's gifts, or a disbelief that God can or that He will grant them; earnest prayer implies exactly the contrary. Thus it is that God's gifts are poured forth in answer to prayer; thus it is that *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much* in bringing to pass God's purposes of pardon and blessing.

But we must not attempt to explain, or even to illustrate, what is inexplicable, and to which nothing that we can know or conceive presents any real analogy; but neither does the impossibility of explanation make it uncertain. Predestination is one Divine truth certainly and definitely revealed in Scripture; the free agency and responsibility of man is another. We know not how this can be; but we

[d] Rom. ix. 25.

do know that it is. We must let each perform its function in conforming us to the image of Christ. The practical result of what we do know is, that we should walk as those whom God has chosen: worthily of our calling, leaving low and sensual things, and rising to the high and spiritual; heartily, as those who are assured that the Lord will finish the work He has begun in us; carefully, fearfully, watchfully, lest after all we should frustrate His purpose for us. It is certain, that if a man be walking with Christ with an honest heart, if his will and conscience do not bear witness against his profession, he may find much comfort in the thought that he is not walking in his own strength and wisdom, but according to the wisdom and strength and will of the Omnipotent and Omniscient. Nor need any one who has unhappily fallen into sin fall still lower into desperation or wretchlessness of unclean living, by the notion that he is ordained to die, as long as he sees around him God's mercies and warnings and dispensations of grace, whereby Christ is seeking to recall the sheep that is lost.

It is certain, too, that all of us in this Church and nation are called; called in Baptism; called in the Church; called by preaching; called by all the various ministries of grace: it has now become almost part of our birthright that we are Christians by calling; our very names signify as much: what we are we know; what we may be we know; what we shall be we know not till the day when the chosen of God are acknowledged as His. Then will the secret

counsels of God stand forth, and also the secret hearts and wills of men. Then will it be seen how the many reprobate have worked their own destruction, even out of the very things which were sent for their salvation. It will be seen too how God's foreknowledge worked on and with the wills of the few chosen, and framed their willing souls and mind to conformity to Him. For the coming of the time when all this will be known we must perforce wait God's good pleasure.

And the doctrine of predestination may raise our eyes to the God of all power and might, the God of heaven and earth, the same Almighty Being from whom all things sprung, and in whom all things have their being, as the Author and Giver of our salvation. And thus it is that definite faith in God the Father as the Author of our salvation is necessary, as well as in Christ; for only those who believe in this His will can expect it to work in them and on them. Thus we are said in Scripture to be justified by God the Father[c]: that is, released from our sins, and reconciled to Him, whose love sent the only-begotten Son into the world for this end. And this love, shining forth as it does, not only out of the Book of grace, the Scripture, but out of the book of nature also, some have thought to be the sole and sufficient cause of our salvation; as if no sacrifice of Christ was needed, before Almighty love, by its own sole energies, took wretched man out of his wretchedness, and gave him happiness here and hereafter:

[c] Rom. viii. 33. 2 Cor. v. 19.

and hence men think to trust to the unlimited love and mercy of God for salvation. "If God so loved the world," say they, "He surely will not cast out any whom He thus has loved." Doubtless it might have been so; but Scripture tells us that God, of His own good will, has been pleased to bind up His saving love for man to the sacrifice of Christ, and our acceptance of it. Why this is we know not, nor does it concern us to know: we seem to gain some faint glimmering of it when we catch sight of His justice in the words, *that He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;* but it is wiser, surely, to receive and wonder than to reason before receiving. Suffice it to say, that so far from the preordained mercy of God being excluded or lessened by the sacrifice of Christ, it is rather heightened and glorified thereby; for this very love of God is most fully set forth and realised in the scheme of Redemption by Christ, far more fully than it is by those who trust to God's mercy without Christ; to them God's love, in spiritual things at least, must be an abstract term conceived of in the visions of hope as that which will embrace them when this life is over and another begins. We do not merely forecast God's love in the far off future, but we realise it to ourselves in His will for us in the past and present. We know that He has loved our souls; we know how and when: we know that *God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us;* that in Him He loved the world; that in Him His love is mani-

fested towards us. To God's mercy and love then do we look as the first cause, as of all things, so of our salvation, but not as excluding the sacrifice of Christ; to the preordaining will of this His love, though not excluding the will and agency of man.

Again, while the doctrine of predestination leads our hearts to ascribe our salvation to God the Father, and to see His will ever working therein; so with reference to our part in the work are we said to be justified[f] or saved by the Holy Spirit; *according to His mercy hath He saved us by—the renewing of the Holy Spirit;* because it is that Holy Spirit who is (so to speak) the minister of His predestinating will: He it is who gives us both effectual repentance and lively faith: He it is by whom, sent to us by God as the Spirit of faith or repentance, our wills, free to err, are turned with gentle violence to Christ, prepared for the effectual reception of Him; through whose invisible operation in the water of baptism the merits of Christ are by faith applied to our souls on our acceptance of Him: He it is who works in us, moving us with good desires, convincing us of sin, purging us and presenting us to Christ; giving us knowledge of the things that are freely given us by Christ; shedding the love of God abroad in our hearts; sealing us with Christ's seal as accepted and beloved; creating us anew unto good works, teaching us in our ignorant minds, guiding us in our faltering steps, enlightening us in our blindness, strengthening us in our weakness, comforting us in our troubles;

[f] 1 Cor. vi. 11.

giving us the spirit of prayer, interpreting for us our utterances. And this will shew us how faith in the existence and operation of the Holy Spirit is necessary for those who would be saved; for he who rejects the Holy Spirit cannot hope to be partaker of the gift of that Spirit, without which no one can even take the first step in the narrow path which leadeth to everlasting life. Thus he who blasphemes and denies the Holy Ghost does virtually and practically cut himself off from the possibility of salvation; he can never hope to be forgiven, either in this world or in the world to come. It is as if a man in a labyrinth were to cut the clue which is to guide him out. And as the predestinating will of God the Father, and the sanctifying operation of God the Holy Ghost, having their separate yet indivisible functions in our redemption, are neither superseded nor controlled by our free agency, so neither do they in any way trench upon or interfere with the sacrifice of Christ as the sole meritorious cause of our Salvation. Who is it that most fully realises God's eternal purposes for him, and his calling in Christ, who is it that most completely apprehends the preconceived message, and experiences the preordained working of the Holy Spirit in his soul, but the man who most fully understands and lays to heart, in its height and length and breadth, the great Gospel revelation, that *the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of JESUS CHRIST might be given to them that believe?*

# LECTURE V.

GALATIANS III. 22.

*But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

THE way in which salvation is offered to man, though full of Divinest wisdom and mercy, is the very last which would have been devised by human reason, or acceptable to human pride. Ambition has ever been a principle of our nature, though in most men it has been checked by that indolence and love of pleasure which is a direct consequence of the fall. Even when earth was more like heaven than it can ever be again, the temptation by which Satan chose to assail Eve was the hope of becoming as gods, knowing good and evil; while the Bible history of the tower of Babel, reflected as it is in the myth of the rebel giants, seems to point to man's desire to raise himself above his present state, and his belief that he had the power of setting at nought the will of Him who had made him what, and placed him where, he is. And we may perhaps find traces of the same notion in the yearnings and strivings of the higher order of minds in old times,

to pass from the visible world into the invisible, which stood to them in the place of, and seemed to them to be, a higher and more spiritual state.

If then salvation had been set before men as something to be won by their own will and strength, those of more energetic temper would have found no slight attraction in the notion of freeing themselves by their own moral or mental energies from the evil which was around and within; it would have flattered man to feel himself the conqueror and to have fought his own way to the promised land. When too we look at the trials and duties of the Christian's course as marked out in the Bible, it seems hard to strip him of his laurels; it seems hard that one who has to fight so hard should after all have to receive the crown as an undeserved gift from the hand of another. Thus man's pride ever rebels against confessing himself to be what he is.

[Now to these ambitious hopes and energies the doctrine of justification by faith only is directly opposed; we are not allowed the triumph—it is of faith, not of works, lest any man should boast—the glory is reserved for God alone—and well it is for us that it is so; that God knows man better than he does himself. Salvation is given us in the only way in which it could be ours; we have seen in the last Lecture how those who think to work out their own salvation find it leads them to a disappointment which is oftentimes the very shadow of despair.]

It is a natural result of this inherent pride and ambition, that to all those who have sought to adapt

Christianity to human views and aims, the doctrine of justification by faith only has always been a stumbling block. Indeed for those many ages of the Church's history in which Christianity was transformed to the likeness of the world, this great Gospel truth was almost forgotten. And on the other hand, it was a natural reaction from its long neglect, that others who saw its scriptural nature, and its adaptation to the real state and real wants of man, gave it so prominent a place in their religious system, as to exclude other truths no less scriptural and necessary, and indeed absolutely implied in it, but which seemed to them to encroach upon or even to contradict the truth to which they had exclusively confined their attention and teaching. [And no small portion of the Christian world were only too glad to accept a view which they could easily use to the purposes of self-deception.

For in most men the principle of ambition was checked by the love of pleasure and dislike of exertion which made them shrink from the toils and sacrifice through which even heathen philosophy made the road to heaven lie; and thence when the doctrine of justification by faith was set forth, many were willing enough so to understand it as if it superseded good works, and thus enabled them to enjoy all that earth holds out for the present, and to hope for all that heaven promises for the future. This Christianity was all the more acceptable to them in that it did not entail upon them the labours and energies which Scripture requires.

And thus there were two opposite errors—the one flattering human pride, the other favouring human self-indulgence; and yet each is founded on that scripture which is meant to destroy both pride and sin; each points to texts of Scripture as its warrant, while comprehensive faith receives and applies them all.]

Nor is this a point of mere abstract theology; for our Church does but say the very truth when she calls the doctrine of justification by faith only most wholesome and very full of comfort; what it takes from human pride it adds to human hope: but it is of the utmost importance to our spiritual state that this doctrine should not be so misused as to be a cloak for continuing in wilful or unrepented sin: for then instead of hope it will bring forth fear, death instead of life.

I must first of all lay before you some distinctions to which I wish to call your attention in the consideration of this very difficult subject. We must distinguish between the act of God by Christ, and the state of man resulting from that act. Justification or remission of sins[a] may be looked upon, firstly, as the act of the Judge of all the earth; wherein, the

[a] The term Justification in its scriptural and theological sense is so nearly equivalent to the remission of sins for Christ's sake, that it may be laid down that when a man is spoken of as justified, it is meant that his sins are forgiven, and whenever a man is said to have obtained remission of sins, there justification must have taken place; and as the latter term conveys of itself a definite notion, which is scarcely the case with the other, I shall not unfrequently use the term Remission of sins, where I might have used with propriety the term Justification.

sufferings of Christ being accepted in place of the penalty we owe, He is pleased to pronounce us judicially (so to speak) free from the punishment of sin, and to account us righteous; imputing to us that guiltlessness which in fact only exists in the person of Him who has thus borne our punishment; and secondly, it may be viewed as the state of guiltlessness wherein a man in Christ is thus placed by God; the state of forgiveness and remission of sins; the being accounted righteous by virtue of the righteousness of Christ — and these must be distinguished from each other. Again, we must distinguish between the act of God's pardoning mercy, of Christ's redeeming love, and our application of it to ourselves; and further, between that which is thus vouchsafed to us, and the instruments and channels whereby it is conveyed to and accepted by us.

With regard to the act of God's pardoning mercy, each man's sins were atoned for at once and for ever when Christ died on the cross. Christ's act whereby our pardon is obtained is not a thing of to-day, or yesterday, or to-morrow; it has been and is performed once for all: and therefore in this sense our justification is already accomplished even before we are born into the world; and God's love for us, Christ's death for us, sinners though we be, nay, because we are sinners, stands forth in the Christian scheme prior to any acceptance or even seeking on our part.

Our pardon is prepared, the price has been paid, the sentence has gone forth—but this does not exclude the acceptance thereof on our part; each per-

son must, so to say, sue it out, and apply the sacrifice of Christ to his own individual soul. And this application of Christ's merits to the cleansing away our sin, and reconciling us with God, this laying hold of the pardon of our sinfulness is not performed once for all; it may, it must, be repeated throughout our life, although it is not in all its details and effects always exactly the same, but differs somewhat according to the state and need of individuals.

When we first accept God's offer of justification we are thereby placed in new relations with God; we become what we never were before, sinless in His sight, His children by adoption, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven: and for this there never can be any claim, or worthiness, or meetness in any of the sons of the fall: all mankind are in this point equal: all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Every one is concluded under sin, so that the gift of life might come through Jesus Christ, and from Him only. It is a free act of the mercy and grace of God in pity towards the sinfulness and hopelessness of those beings whom He had once created in his own likeness; not, indeed, so free but that it is purchased for us by the blood of Christ, but still perfectly free as far as regards ourselves, or any thing we have done or can do. God's mercy has provided for us an ark not of man's building; and for those who take refuge therein, the flood of sin which overwhelms the rest of the world does but bear them higher and nearer to heaven; their sins are atoned for in Christ's person on the cross:

His righteousness is imputed to them in consequence of their believing in and trusting to Him and His work for them.

But while Scripture thus places before us the remission of our sins and the imputation of righteousness not our own as the free gift of God to faith, without any works or merit of our own, so does it likewise perpetually place before us also sanctification as implied in the effectual application of Christ's merits to our souls. It is, surely, impossible to read the Bible without seeing that a Christian from the very moment of his becoming so is to be holy; that though sinners, we are to be saints; that every one who nameth the name of Christ is to depart from iniquity. Nor is this spoken of merely as if it were vicarious holiness consisting in the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, though that is the crown and perfection of our spiritual state; but in that personal holiness which consists in the work of the Holy Spirit within us: for we cannot too constantly remember that any holiness we have in ourselves is simply the submission of our wills to that most holy Power of good; and this connection between justification and sanctification may be shown in more ways than one.

[First, In the benefits of Christ's sacrifice applied to our souls by faith, there is not only remission, but also renovation. In justification the penalty of Adam's sin is remitted to us; and part of that penalty was the withdrawal of the Spirit and the consequent inability to do good works pleasing unto God in the highest sense; and hence our punishment having been borne

by Christ, this power of good works is restored to us, not by any change in our natural powers themselves, but by the gift of the Spirit to direct and sanctify them; and thus it is not, like faith, the instrument whereby we lay hold on Christ's mercy, but part of the benefit received. Hence we do not make void the law through faith; yea, we rather establish the law: for if good works be, as is generally held, the necessary result and fruits of faith, then must there be implied in the spiritual state produced by faith the gift of the Spirit, without which good works are impossible. And the same connection is implied in the expression *purifying their hearts by faith* [b], for this purification is the work of the Holy Spirit. And again the victory over the world ascribed by St. John to Faith has the same bearing on this question, for this victory over the world is nothing more or less than that practical holiness of life which flows from the gift of the same Spirit.

And again, such texts as *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,* show us that an in-pouring of the Spirit as the power of holiness accompanies the imputation of Christ's righteousness in our justification, though it is distinct and different from it; that the gift of the Spirit and the remission of sins are two parts of the same gift: if any man be in Jesus he must be justified, nor can any man be justified without being in Jesus: they are, logically speaking, convertible terms, and imply each other; and surely this new creation does not consist in a new

[b] Acts xv. 9.

view of ourselves, our conditions, our destinies, our salvation, but in a real power of spiritual good within us, issuing in actual counsels and acts of life, in actual turning from sin, in the actual possession of the Christian graces: *If Christ be in us the Spirit is life because of* (or rather *through*, διά) *righteousness:* and hence in the Epistle to the Corinthians sanctification and righteousness are said to be the results of our being in Christ Jesus; and in the same Epistle sanctification and justification are spoken of in the same breath; and again in the Epistle to the Hebrews we are said to be sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, and the blood of the covenant [a].

And though there are passages which speak of imputed righteousness as the only result of faith, yet also are there passages which speak of holiness as if it were the sole result of our Saviour's coming upon earth: but in neither passage does the mention of the one exclude the other, which is similarly set forth elsewhere.]

Nor does this presence of the Spirit of righteousness in our souls as a living and governing principle of action in any way trench on the office of faith, or on the being accounted righteous by faith only. We need the righteousness of Christ no less than we should if there were no mention of personal holiness in the Bible; for this personal holiness, does not atone for our sins, nor cover them, nor procure us

[a] 1 Cor. i. 30: vi. 11. Heb. x. 10 and 29.

salvation, nor reconcile us to God : this is done by Christ's righteousness alone. It is, moreover, as I have before observed, something received by faith as part of that which is given us for Christ's sake, not set up against it as if it were an antagonistic and independent instrument of salvation.

Comprehensive faith, then, holds each without denying the other ; she finds that both are definitely and clearly stated in Scripture, and therefore she does not venture to sacrifice either to the other : and it is from contrasting these two results of the sacrifice of Christ, instead of combining them, that some have held that justification does make us personally righteous, others that it does not : the truth being that imputed righteousness and personal righteousness are so inseparably connected, that when one takes place the other takes place also ; so sometimes one, sometimes the other is represented as the result of the cause common to both, the sacrifice of Christ, and our personal application thereof by faith.

[In order to understand this more clearly we must distinguish between the scriptural use of the word *righteous* when used to signify the being looked upon as innocent, in what may be called its forensic sense, and when used to denote either the state of the unregenerate man who was living up to the light and law which he had, or that comparative degree of holiness which man by the Holy Spirit is able to attain unto, and to which, perhaps, we should hardly have ventured to apply the term had not Scripture so applied it ; even though it also declares that *there is*

*none righteous, no, not one*[b]. In the first sense Christ's holiness is only imputed to us; in the second, it is proposed to us as an example, and up to a certain degree communicated to us by the gift and working of the Spirit; inasmuch as we are in our hearts and lives to be conformed to the image and stature of Christ, to follow him, though with faltering steps and at an immeasurable distance.

Nor does the imputed righteousness of Christ exhaust the Scripture idea of righteous as necessary for salvation, nor are they to be confounded together in such a way as to allow any one to argue that he is righteous in the one sense because he fancies himself to be righteous in the other. It must have been some such notion that St. John is warning us against when he says, *Be not deceived, he that doeth righteousness is righteous*[c]. It may be said that the one implies the other. So it does, if it is real: but it is safest to use Scripture language, and Scripture certainly does use the term in both senses: righteousness was imputed to Abraham in the first sense, and it is attributed directly to Lot in the second.]

Nor must I omit again to state distinctly that, after all, this personal holiness is no work of man's self, no result of any power or tendency of our own, but of grace turning our powers and tendencies into a new direction, and by a new path. It is simply Christ abiding in us by His Spirit, and using our wills and faculties, so far as we yield them to Him, as the instruments whereby He works and

[b] Rom. iii. 10. [c] 1 John iii. 7.

manifests Himself. So that He is not only our righteousness in the sense of our being accounted that which we are not and cannot be, unstained by sin, but also because whatever holiness we may have is His, or rather, He in us. He is our sanctification as well as our justification: He is our wisdom, because if we are wise unto salvation it is He that is wise in us, and not we ourselves.

And though all holiness within us is God's work and not man's, and thus has in it somewhat of the Divine life, yet it in no wise supersedes or supplies the place of that complete clothing of the whole Christian man, body, soul, and spirit, by Christ's superhuman and yet human righteousness; that stainless wedding robe which is prepared for His servants, when their bodies have been purified by death, their souls set free from earthly lusts, their spirits wholly clothed upon by the Spirit of God: when they will be summoned to the marriage supper of the Lamb, when His bride, the Church, shall be received into her place in heaven. As long as we live here, as long as we are men on earth, this holiness of ours, as far as it is in us, must be a very imperfect and comparative acceptance of what is in itself perfect and final; for our sanctification consists of the in-pouring of the Spirit, and submission of our wills; the former is the positive act of God through faith, ever accompanying the real application of the merits of Christ; the latter, alas! is in our power to do or not to do, as we choose; for Scripture tells the sad secret of the falling away of the children of God: that we are able to quench the Spirit, by being en-

ticed of our own lusts into following our fleshly wills. Nor need it be said in how many cases the combined deceitfulness of sin and of our hearts makes it needful for us to use heartily the confession which the Church wisely and truly puts into our mouths, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us." How earnestly, even while we strive to let our light shine before men to the glory of God, we must look forward to the time when the light, as well as the darkness which is in us, will be absorbed and lost in the glories of imputed righteousness.

Hence, from the imperfection of our most perfect endeavours, arises the necessity for what may be called the daily application of the merits of Christ to ourselves; a daily taking advantage of the act of justification, of the pardon once pronounced over us by God for Christ's sake; so that we may be released from the burden of those sins which day by day we have grievously committed, in thought, word, and deed, against His Divine Majesty. We must know that we have no health in us: but thanks be to God, our sickness need not be unto death; our Physician is ever at hand to heal us; we have not to cast about for an acceptable way of making our peace with God; we have not to say, "how shall we ascend into heaven, or how shall we descend into the deep?" but we have to feel our sin, our need of a Saviour; to turn from our sin, at least in heart and will, and to believe on Him, and what He has done for us; and our past sins, though they were as

scarlet, will become white as snow. Oh wonderful wisdom of God, in thus seeing the secret needs of man's heart! oh wonderful love of the Father! oh wonderful virtue of the blood which was shed! oh wonderful power of faith!

This need of continual cleansing, this laying hold of His all-sufficient sacrifice, by this power of faith, is what our Church teaches us to seek in her several prayers and sacraments. This is what she teaches us to seek in the daily confession of our sins: this too, when she puts into our mouth the prayer, "that we may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of His passion"—"that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of the God of all mercy perfect remission and forgiveness." This is what she teaches us when His ministers in her proclaim to all that truly repent, that He pardoneth and absolveth them. It is this scriptural comfort that she teaches us to seek, when she puts before our souls the Scripture truth, that "*if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*"—"*the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.*" In the midst of the condemnation which speaks to us from our works, it is a wholesome doctrine truly and full of comfort, that if we believe with our hearts on the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved. It is no small blessing to us, that in our Church we are led to feel the necessity and the certainty of obtaining day by day, by daily energies of faith, the pardon of the sins we have committed.

And thus life goes on; the Christian pilgrims day by day seeking for and obtaining mercy from Him in whom their faith unceasingly and unchangeably rests, till at the last we shall stand before the judgment-seat. What shall we then do? Shall we point to our lives—to what we have done—to what we have suffered? Shall we say that our good deeds, if fairly weighed, will be found to counterbalance the evil? No, surely; unless we have put on Christ, we shall be speechless; our works will make us dumb; and if we have put Him on, we shall turn in haste from what we were on earth, to what He was and is for us. We shall look to Him, and say, "Lord, Thou hast saved me." We shall point to the cross, and say, we trust to Him who died thereon; that there our sins are atoned for, our pardon won. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of those who thus put their trust in Him, round whose unrighteousness His righteousness is thrown, as a robe of spotless light, such as no fuller on earth can whiten? Our Judge —nay, He is our advocate, our sacrifice—sinless Himself, He makes us sinless in Him. Shall the adversary, the accuser, lift up his voice against us? Nay, but he sees that we have our pardon in our hands: he knows that we do not trust to our works, wherein he could easily find enough to condemn us; he knows that the sacrifice of Christ has long been accepted by God as a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and specially of those who believe.

But while our Church does thus scripturally set

forth and hold most unreservedly the great evangelical doctrine of justification by faith only, neither does she lose sight of the equally scriptural fact, that holiness and repentance have both of them definite places assigned to them by God in the work of our salvation—places from which man has not the power, and ought not to have the wish, to cast them down. Repentance necessarily waits on justification, whether it be viewed as the change of heart which chooses God instead of mammon; that abhorrence of and sorrow for sin, without which a man cannot effectually turn to Christ; or the continual progressive renewal which follows on such an effectual turning. And the relations between repentance and faith before conversion are sufficiently marked in Scripture, where it is *repent and believe*, not *believe and repent*. There are even passages which speak of repentance as alone necessary to salvation, without one word of belief or faith, just as there are texts which speak of faith without one word of repentance; but the latter no more exclude repentance, than the former exclude faith; in fact, they imply each other. The immediate result of true repentance is acceptance of our Saviour by faith, just as true faith implies previous repentance[d]; while the one or the other is brought forward according to circumstances of time, place, or person. Thus when the Jews, on the day of Pentecost, asked St. Peter, *What shall we do to be saved?* St. Peter answers them, *Repent and be baptized*,

[d] See Acts xx. 21. Mark i. 15.

because on that repentance, on the removal, that is, of the hardness of heart, of the false views of salvation, which had so long made them shut their minds against the evidently Divine character and mission of Christ, it would follow, as a matter of course, that they would believe on Him, whom they had ignorantly crucified. While in another case, that of the gaoler at Philippi, he had, by his very anxiety to receive the religion for the sake of which the Apostles were in prison, manifested repentance, and therefore St. Paul answers the same question by, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*," without one word of repentance; while it is clear, from the history of Simon Magus, that the words, *Believe, and thou shalt be saved*, would not in every case express all that was necessary for justification; for we read that Simon Magus believed, as his very sin proves that he did; and yet St. Peter tells him that he was in the bond of iniquity. And sometimes neither faith nor repentance are mentioned, as in the case of St. Paul: here repentance and faith had evidently taken possession of his mind at his conversion, and hence, by God's command, it was said to him, "*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.*" Baptism alone was in his case required to complete the work which faith and repentance had begun: but surely we should be wrong in arguing from this passage, that baptism alone was necessary to salvation, though the argument is as fair and conclusive in one case as the other.

Repentance, then, occupies a place in the work of

making the merits of Christ available to us; and the system which excludes the one is as unscriptural as that which excludes the other; not that repentance occupies the same place as faith—there is no such thing as justifying or saving repentance, even in the sense in which there is justifying or saving faith.

But there are other grounds drawn directly from Scripture, why we are not warranted in thinking of repentance as of no importance to faith, much less in speaking of it, as it has been spoken of—for our trust in Christ must of course be wholly founded on His promises,—we cannot trust further than His promises extend—and His promises do not extend to unrepented sin, and therefore without repentance our trust in Christ is impossible. And hence from the moment of a believer's acceptance of Christ and the benefits of His Passion, he has need of daily repentance—not as a substitute for faith, but as the handmaid thereof—firstly, because there must be daily progress, daily renewal, daily transformation, continual mortifying the old man, daily advancement in Christian graces. In religion, *non progredi est regredi*—the pale shades of night must be hourly giving way to the bright tints of morning—the bright tints of morning must ever be brightening into the brightness of the mid-day sun; the powers of the old man must daily be clothed upon by the Christ within. And, secondly, because, unless we repent of and confess our sins, we shall fail daily to apply by faith the merits of Christ to ourselves to do away with those sins, which, if allowed to accu-

mulate, will create a darkness in our souls whereby we shall not be able to see them, much less to lay them on Christ's head. It is often from this neglect of daily sins, this hiding them, as it were, in a vague notion of the general sinfulness of mankind, that men allow sin to regain dominion over them. There is no more fatal sign of a man's spiritual state, no more hardening process, than when a man sins at first without caring for it, then without knowing it. If we say that we have no need of daily repentance, no daily sins to confess, we not only deceive ourselves, but we destroy ourselves, for we shut ourselves out from the fountains of mercy.

And, lest the doctrine of justification by faith only should become a snare to men's souls, by making them careless about holiness, Scripture sets before us most plainly and unceasingly a doctrine of good works; assigning to them not indeed the same office as faith, but still a very important one. We have already seen that holiness is rather a result than a cause of our being accounted righteous; it is true, indeed, that the so called good works of the heathen may, as we have seen in a former Lecture[f], make him more ready to receive the Gospel; the instrument that is tuned, though but rudely, obeys the master's touch more readily than that in which there is nothing but discord; and the history of Cornelius teaches us that they may in this way be said to move God to present for our acceptance by faith the knowledge of a Saviour: but good works in no sense

[f] See Lecture III.

make a man more worthy or more meet for this undeserved mercy of God; and it is clear from many passages, as well as many instances in Scripture, that they are not even the necessary antecedents of justification. We have seen, too, that faith is the instrument whereby certain gifts are conveyed to the soul, and that the power of good works, without which of course good works cannot exist, is part of the gift so conveyed, part of that gift which is given us so freely, that we have done nothing, can do nothing, to earn or deserve it. In ourselves as men, in ourselves even as Christians, we have no title to forgiveness. In Christ we have through faith, for thus God has promised it us. Nor does this doctrine of good works involve any notion of establishing our own righteousness. It is not by any works or deservings of our own that the stain is washed out, and the punishment averted; even in our best works, inasmuch as they fall short of perfect obedience, we are accursed[g]; and all mankind are on the same footing, as far as merit is concerned, sinner and saint alike: all this will suffice to show that faith and good works in no way interfere with each other. Nor again does it take away from the comfortableness of the doctrine of justification—for Scripture does not lay down any absolute standard or degree of holiness—this must differ, will differ in different men, according to temperaments, opportunities, position, temptations: hence no man may on these grounds judge his brother in respect of his final acceptance; God is the sole judge; what is at the least required of all is an honest struggle

[g] Gal. iii. 10.

against sin and temptation; but, it is a sad misuse of the comfort contained in the doctrine of faith, so to set it forth as to make willing sinners comfortable in their sin.

The notion of the merit of good works has probably arisen from those texts which excite us to good works by putting before us the reward attached to them; for though the notion of merit is excluded, not so that of reward. There are very many passages of Scripture which speak of salvation, everlasting life, the crown of glory, as the reward, though not the consequence of good works, vouchsafed to faith through the free mercy of God for the sake of the sufferings of Christ. It cannot be denied that works of piety and charity are represented in Scripture as winning God's favour for those who believe; and it is surely doing great injustice to the doctrine of justification by faith only, to speak of it as if it destroyed the teaching of these passages; if either one or the other must be given up, for one passage which speaks of justification by faith only, many may be brought which speak of or imply the absolute necessity of good works; but they stand together in the word of God, as they were combined by His wisdom.

And this has a practical bearing on our views of life, and our salvation. There is doubtless danger lest those whose will and opportunities, inspired and improved by grace, lead them to a life of active piety[h], should trust to it rather than to Christ, and so make shipwreck of their faith. So cunning, so watchful, so persevering, is our enemy, that he seeks to turn

[h] Whitehall Sermons, page 172.

what should have been for our good into an occasion of falling. But the devil does not tempt us on one side only; there is a danger, put forward quite as prominently and frequently in Scripture, lest those who have opportunities vouchsafed to them should be as barren fig-trees,—leaves, and no fruit; words, and no works;—it is true, too, that the more a man abounds in good works, the greater will be the assurance with which, grounding himself on the express counsels of God, he looks forward to the recompense of the reward; but still, as far as any notion of desert goes, he is no wise in any different position from him who comes to Christ when the heat of the day is over. Salvation is the gift of God to both alike.

Nor does it make much difference whether the doctrine of human deserving be modified by adding, that good works have indeed in themselves no merit, but have been made meritorious by Christ's death. Here is the same confusion between reward and merit; it is indeed by Christ's death that reward is attached to them; but this blessing, undeserved as it is, rather excludes than implies the notion of merit, which is of right.

Those then alike fall short of the comprehensive faith of the Bible and of our Church, who, on the one hand, hold or teach that good works are, either in themselves or by virtue of Christ's death, meritorious; and those who, on the other, speak of good works as if they were absorbed or rendered unnecessary by faith, or as if they were a presumptuous in-

terference with the work and glory of Christ; each loses sight of the truth which the other exclusively maintains. The Bible is our sure guide, and it is sufficient for me to remind you of the great practical lesson which, amid all the theological strifes on justification and sanctification, faith and works, is ever in the Bible impressed on those who wish to make their calling and election sure, that while they put all their trust in Christ by faith, none in themselves, or in what they do, they nevertheless be *careful to maintain good works*, and *to have a conscience void of offence towards God and man.*

And this is most forcibly impressed upon us by the Scripture revelation, that in the day of judgment every man will have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and give an account of what he has done in the body, and receive according to his works, whether they be good or evil. Our Lord has in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew lifted a corner of the veil, and allowed us to see some of the secrets of that day. There is not in the whole Bible a more impressively awful passage than that, in which we read of those who, thinking themselves safe through their belief, find themselves cast out for lack of those works which would have resulted from their faith, had it been real: and of those too who, so far from trusting in or pleading their works that they were even unconscious of them, do nevertheless find those works acknowledged and accepted by Christ as done to Himself—here we find that in the day of account the question whether we have faith, whether we are

Christians or not, will be decided by those very works which are utterly powerless of themselves to save us.

But after all, the mean whereby the merits of Christ are applied to our souls, and the blessings, thus given us, accepted, whether at our first admission into His body, or in our daily struggles, or at the last, is faith. Not, however, that we ascribe even to faith any merit or justifying power of its own; this belongs to Christ alone: and faith, like other energies belonging to man, may not interfere with His glory or prerogative. We only mean, that we are made partakers of the justification which Christ has prepared for us solely by putting our whole trust in Him, or, in other words, by faith, *per fidem propter Christum*.

And what is faith? It is no wonder that an abstract term, which must, up to a certain point, derive a meaning from the experiences of each individual and the dogma of each school, should have received a variety of explanations and definitions, each of which has narrowed its scriptural force and use; these it is the privilege of comprehensive belief to realise, by receiving and combining them all as far as they are found in God's word.

What is faith? It may be somewhat understood by its results. It is no partial or transient feverish emotion, with which the soul throbs now and then, but it is the regular pulse of our spiritual life. It is not an occasional recognition of the facts of our redemption, but a steady, lively remembrance of all

that Christ has done for us. It is not merely the casting an occasional glance to Him, not an occasional dedication of ourselves to Him as His liege subjects; but it is a fixed and concentrated gaze, the total surrender of ourselves, our reason, and our wills. It is not an occasional *Lord, Lord;* but it is as if a man should say, "Lord, Thou art mine, and I am Thine; I am sick, do Thou heal me; I am lame, do Thou support me; I am blind, do Thou lead me; I am lost, do Thou save me;" combined with a ready mind, a firm step, a quick eye: a ready mind, to do what He bids, to follow where He leads; a quick eye, to see His bidding, catch His glance and meaning; a firm step, to tread in His path. In the days of physical miracles, or of the more visible working of God's hand in the things of daily life, it could remove mountains, stop the mouths of lions: in these days of spiritual miracles, of the invisible dealings of God with the soul, it can remove the burden of sin, and ward off *the fiery darts of the wicked one:* keep us safely from the *lion*, who *goeth about seeking whom he may devour.*

Thus it bends our wills to the will of the Spirit, making us see our true wisdom and happiness. Faith arms us for the battle; faith promises us victory, and reveals to us Christ on our side. Faith puts vividly before us the crown of glory; it looks into futurity; in self-denial it can see future triumph; in the seed time it can see the crop; it can trace beginnings to their ends, counsels to their issues: in sin it can hear the *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth;* in

holiness it can catch the words, *Well done, good and faithful servant:* it sees and seizes upon opportunities which pass by other men unobserved: it sees the angel of God in the way. It can detect Satan in his most cunning disguises. In a vain, profitless, idle, thoughtless youth, it can see the worldly, ambitious, covetous, selfish man of the world; and still further, unless repentance comes in, the faithless, hopeless, godless death-bed. In the light-hearted enthusiasm, the noble self-denial and self-discipline, the patient, eager industry, the humble trust, of a godly boy, it can see the formed mind, the vigorous action, the determined will, the patient purpose, of the man of God.

And in itself it is variously described in Scripture. First, it is what might perhaps be more conveniently called belief, except that it is not distinguished by a separate term in Scripture; and that it is safer and truer to use Scripture language on such points than the terms and distinctions of theology: it is a merely intellectual energy, wherein the reason assents to what is proposed to it on the sufficient evidence of Divine revelation, whether in nature or in grace, though it be above its power to comprehend the nature or possibility of its existence. Now this simple act of the intellect is not excluded from the notion of faith; for it is mostly this sort of faith which we read of previously to our Saviour's resurrection in those who received and worshipped our Saviour as the Prophet sent from God. Nor indeed does even St. Peter's declaration,

*Thou art the Son of God*, seem to go further than the recognition of our Saviour as the Messiah: and even this intellectual act of belief may be considered to imply a certain degree of repentance or preparation of heart; for the evidence being moral, and not scientific, the intellect would have rejected it, unless itself had been biassed by some degree of spiritual desire and hope. And thus, on the other hand, hardness of heart is given as the cause why the Jews were unable to see any thing but foolishness in Him to whose Divine nature and office every hour bore a more and more convincing witness.

And it may well be that in old times this intellectual faith had a greater religious value, so to speak, than it can have now: for it then required a far greater submission of the reason, and implied a far greater preparation of the heart, to receive a religion everywhere spoken against and persecuted, than now, when, in name and profession at least, it is accepted in every part of the civilized world; when, in our way of viewing it, it is almost synonymous with civilization: with most men it now requires no effort of the reason, no submission to the will, to assent, at least, to that which is everywhere recognised by the general voice of the world; which has been handed down and impressed on our tenderest memories, and is repeated around us by a thousand voices of popular belief and feeling. And hence in Scripture faith is sometimes spoken of as if it were merely an intellectual belief in this or that part of revelation; not that it excluded or superseded the

rest, but included and implied them. At the present day it affords very little evidence of the state of the inner man; and therefore by no man can it be received as giving him assurance of safety, till it has passed from the reason to the other parts of our being: for the essential resemblances and essential differences between a living and a dead faith, between a saving and an accusing faith, may be stated very briefly, and yet, I think, fully, by saying that in both the intellectual energy is the same: the same truth believed, the same propositions accepted: but in a dead faith these do not go beyond the reason; they abide there like any mathematical truth: in living faith they pass from the reason, though still abiding there; they steal through, and leaven and spiritualise the instincts, desires, affections: in short, the whole inner man, changing both it and its relations to the outer world, arming conscience with new powers, giving love a new sphere, opening to hope new visions, giving life a new character and new destiny. And this again shews that justification cannot take place without sanctification; for if faith, to be real faith, must spread itself through the moral man, turning him from the world to God, it follows, that if a man is not sanctified, neither is he justified.

And this faith again, whether living or dead, is spoken of in Scripture in different ways. In its simplest form, it is that faith of natural religion which is also an element in Christian faith—a belief in God and His goodness and power: *He that cometh*

*to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*[h]. This is doubtless an element of saving faith; but where do we find in Scripture that it is, as some would contend, the whole of it?

So again it is spoken of as a simple belief in some special revelation which God was pleased to give of Himself and His will and His power. The faith of Abraham[i], for instance, which was counted to him for righteousness, as our faith is to us, was belief in the wisdom and truth of God, and a reception of Him as the rightful Lord of all his actions and counsels, his goings out and comings in. And, indeed, the whole of the instances of the acts of faith given in the 11th chapter of the Hebrews do not imply a belief of any thing relating to our Saviour, but a simple belief in God, and a reception of His word; sufficient for them, because no more was within their reach; not sufficient for us, to whom the whole counsels of God have been disclosed.

Again, it is spoken of as a simple belief in our Saviour, in whatever character and degree He was pleased to reveal the kingdom; a simple acceptance of the mysteries and powers connected with Him; a knowledge of spiritual things; of Gospel facts, as told to us by Christ or His apostles, and handed down to us in the Scriptures.

This was the faith which could work miracles, speak in tongues, or exercise other spiritual powers, as the Spirit gave, not to all alike, but severally

[h] Heb. xi. 6. [i] Heb. xi. 8.

to every man according to His will. This in itself implied no real acceptance, nor even a real knowledge, of our Lord in His highest functions, no real belief of the heart unto salvation. This was the faith of those who were to prophesy in His name, and cast out devils, (and who therefore must have had *some* faith,) and yet all the while work iniquity, so as to draw from Him the words, *Depart from me*[j]. This is the faith which is below charity, as being only an imperfect sort of knowledge; which will be lost when we see face to face. And this knowledge of and belief in spiritual things is necessary, in a greater or less degree, according to our opportunities, as an ingredient of true faith.

And this to us, with the Bible in our hands, and the Church as a witness to the Bible around us, implies a belief in all that the Spirit of God has told us in the Bible; such as the doctrine of Trinity in Unity; belief in Three as One, belief in each separately; and this not only because each is revealed to us by Christ, but because a belief in each is necessary to the effectual acceptance of that part of our spiritual privileges which flows to us severally from each: for instance, belief in God the Father as our Father is necessary in order to our effectually receiving the adoption of sons; in His will for us is necessary in order to that will working in us; in God the Son as our sacrifice, in order to our effectually laying hold of the benefit thereof; in God the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of truth and holiness, in order

j Mat. vii. 22.

to our partaking of those operations and influences without which we cannot be saved. Thus does faith minister to us of the several mercies which God has been pleased to provide for us, as it is written, *according to your belief be it unto you.*

Nor is it confined exclusively to one part of our Saviour's life or being; of all the Persons in the Godhead He is oftenest revealed to us, most clearly and variously; and therefore our faith in Him must be, so to speak, more manifold, as it presents Him to us in a greater variety of aspects and relations: each of these points, as far as they are presented to us, is to be believed with our whole heart as fully, and definitely, and lovingly as if each were the whole, and yet not so as to hide or overshadow the rest.

And thus does Scripture speak. We are, for instance, said sometimes to be saved by our belief in our Saviour as God, and the Son of God, and in His mission upon earth[1]; the first step, so to say, to receiving Him in His more immediate relation to us. Thus the eunuch's belief that Jesus was the Son of God was complete enough to admit him to the privileges of a believer, because this is what he gathered from the prophecy which Philip interpreted to him; though of course, compared with the knowledge of Christ, which was afterwards disclosed to him or the Church, it was a very imperfect state of belief. Not that this belief in our Saviour's divinity and mission renders unnecessary a belief too in any or all of the points which Scripture reveals as connected with

[1] 1 St. John iv. 2 and 15.

this twofold nature; His eternal existence; His miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost; His perfect humanity, and yet freedom from sin; in short, all those matters which our creeds have gathered for us from Scripture, and which make up the Scripture account of Christ, come into that belief which believes in the Christ of the Bible; and each of them moreover has a distinct bearing on the general scheme of Christ's redemption.

Some of them are pointed out in Scripture as special objects of belief, especial causes of our salvation: thus, for instance, we are said to be saved by our Saviour's resurrection, because this is the part of Christ's existence, by power and virtue of which we rise again unto newness of life *through faith in the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead*[k]. This is spoken of as absolutely as if nothing else were necessary for our salvation; and yet no true Christian would argue from it that it is not necessary for a man to believe in Christ's sacrifice; it does not exclude the rest; our belief in this, if it is faith, includes and implies belief in all; for, as I have shewn in the first Lecture[l], that alone is Scripture faith which receives not only this or that portion of Divine truth, but the whole of it, as it falls on our spiritual vision.

And yet comprehensive faith, while it accepts and realises each of these articles of our belief, each in its fulness, does not limit itself to them; for these several acts and parts of faith tend to and end in,

[k] Col. ii. 12. Rom. x. 9. Cf. Rom. iv. 24. [l] Page 27.

are combined and perfected by that highest revelation of God, which points to Christ on the cross; that highest energy of the soul, which looks to the crowning act of His suffering, the act of our justification, with undivided trust. This it is which may perhaps be in the highest and most proper sense called justifying faith, because it realises that which justifies us; but neither does this exclude the rest, each in their several proportion and degree; nor do any of these supersede the necessity of Baptism, or Prayer, or the Holy Communion, or any thing else which God has been pleased to ordain.

Nor is there any thing indefinite or uncertain herein, whether they be taken separately or together; each is laid down in Scripture with as much clearness and precision as if it alone were all; they do not neutralize nor interfere with each other: together they fill the intellect, leaven the heart, move the feelings, quicken the desires, raise the hopes, purify the souls of those whom they are designed to bring unto final acceptance, and in some sort to prepare for heaven.

And besides all these, perfect and complete as they seem to be, there is yet another element of saving faith, the result of all the rest: a personal assurance of our own redemption in Christ, a looking forward to the realisation of that hope the consolations of which we now feel. To the eye of this sort of faith it is not mankind who are sinners, but ourselves. It was not Adam's sin only which crucified Christ, but my sin. It was not for mankind that Christ died, but for me.

It was not that He has sought for many lost sheep, but that He has sought me, and found me, and carried me gently in His arms, and placed me in His own fold, and given me to drink of that grace which springs up unto everlasting life. An assurance unmixed with fear, unsullied by doubt as far as regards Christ's power and will to save, as far as regards His having saved us; but not without fear and trembling when we look to ourselves, and know that in order to be saved finally we must remain steadfast in good works. He who has not this sort of assurance, who does not believe that He is in Christ and Christ in him, in whose soul fear of the Judge ever rises up rather than trust in the Advocate, he has not saving faith. There is some secret sin growing at the root of the tree; some enemy has poisoned the spring whence should flow unto him the waters of everlasting life. And hence too we may see how good works are essential to faith. He who is in unrepented sin, or he who cares not for works of piety and love, cannot, with the 25th chapter of St. Matthew before him, think of himself as living in the faith and fear of Christ; cannot truly think of Christ as any thing more to him than the Saviour of the world. It is essential to our faith that we should know it to be justifying faith.

For can it ever be a matter of much doubt to us, unless we wish to deceive ourselves, whether we have faith or not: it is neither slow nor unwilling to bear witness to its own presence. If it is present, it will overcome the world; if it be absent, the

world will have overcome us, and destroyed us: if it be present, it will consecrate us and all that belongs to us to the service of God; if it be absent, we shall straightway think that what God has given us is wholly our own: we shall stand as it were on the rights of self against God; if it be present, the course and the wisdom of this world, life, power, talents, opportunities, wealth spent in nothing but self-indulgence and self-degradation, will seem to us madness; if it be absent, the lusts of the flesh and the spirit, the pomps and vanities of the world, amusements, pleasures—pride of place, birth, talents, wealth—will occupy our being: those spiritual blessings and duties which God has intrusted to us, and put in our path, will seem both in theory and practice to be of little moment when compared with the accidents of temporal existence. If it be absent, we shall ever be clinging to some unscriptural form or view of Christianity or other: to the notion that being sinners we shall be saved by our sin: or that the undefined mercy of God will save those who have not been His or on His side in life; to the hope that after all, personal union with Christ through faith working by love is not the secret of our salvation, fearing lest perchance the Bible be true, and our hopes false. If it be present, it will ever be increasing; we shall ever be growing in grace and holiness, and dwell with increasing fruition and increasing assurance on the sure mercies of God in Jesus Christ, for then *the Spirit will bear witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God.*

# LECTURE VI.

Rom. viii. 16.

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

IT is one of the most practical results of Christian faith on the heart of man that it raises the eye of hope from earth to heaven, from this life to another. In days of old, visions, perhaps, of the islands of the blessed, and of the princes and judges of the dead may have floated across the mind; but it was rather as the creations of the poet's imagination, or the fancies of a popular superstition, than as giving any real practical direction to the thoughts or hopes. They did not find any place among the realities of life from which they were separated by the broad river of death. The needs or the aims of the day, the good of country or family, the calm ease of philosophic study, or the busy excitement of active life; the ambitions and triumphs of the forum or the battle-field,—these gave shape and purpose to the powers and energies of men; and if a serious thought of future reward and punishment, future happiness and misery, ever crossed the mind, it was too dim and

vague to turn them from the pursuits of the present; they were content, for the most part, to enjoy their day, and let life's morrow take care for itself.

Now with the Christian all this is altered; nay, even wherever Christianity is preached, there can be very few, even of those to whom it is practically preached in vain, on whom the future does not press with more or less of importunity; whatever may be a man's calling, whether he be in luxury or poverty, in the busiest crowds of the city or the quietest retreats of the country, the same question is suggested to the mind by a thousand things and voices around, "Am I in the way of salvation?" "Will heaven be mine?"]

We have seen, moreover, in the last Lecture, that the being able to give a satisfactory answer to this question; the being able to feel assurance more or less according to individual temperament and circumstances, of our being among Christ's elect—the looking to Him as dying for us, on ourselves as saved by Him—is necessary to the completeness of that faith which so applies to us His merits as to obtain justification and all other benefits present and to come of His Passion.

And to this question theologians and schools of theology have returned a variety of answers, each professing to be founded on the word of God, and each, perhaps, containing an element of truth with more or less admixture of error. These it is my purpose to consider in the present Lecture, together with such collateral notions as will spring out of points more directly brought before you.

And first I will speak of those who place their hopes of salvation on the predestinate counsels of God for them. Now that this can give them no real assurance is clear from the fact that these absolute decrees of God, be their nature and effect on human destinies what they may, are hidden from mankind; whatever may be the certainty and necessity of their operation, yet the test and evidence whereby this predestination is discerned or even guessed at must be looked for in something besides itself; there must be something to which it is to be referred; and it is evident that whatever is to be referred to something else cannot of itself give assurance. And our Church does truly give the teaching of Scripture, when in her article on predestination she lays down the result, and therefore the tangible test, of being predestinate, to be the walking religiously in good works.

We have already seen that the doctrine of predestination does not destroy the free will or the responsibility of man, or do away with the necessity of a holy life. And hence no man can say of himself that he is predestinate; for there must be much in his heart and life which, if fairly examined, will lead him to doubt it. Every one, on the other hand, who knows that he has been admitted into Christ's body according to His will, and by His ordinances—who knows that he is created anew unto good works, and lives in accordance with this conviction, may hope that he is of the number of those who have from the beginning been ordained unto salvation: but no one who is living in wilful or unrepented sin, no one who is setting God's grace and God's laws at defiance, can find any

Scriptural reason for comfort or hope in the predestinate counsels of God; and to apply such comfort or hope to oneself or others is indeed a most fearful perversion of Scripture, a most fearful injury to the souls of men. It is, surely, no light thing to say of the Holy Spirit that He has sealed unto the day of redemption those whose lives are a practical denial of God and Christ.

[Still, though we may hold that the main purpose of this mysterious doctrine being thus revealed is to set forth the glory of God, yet it is, doubtless, of great practical use in giving encouragement to those who are working out their salvation with seriousness of purpose: it may aid us much in resisting the world, the flesh, and the devil, to know, that if we are true to ourselves God will never desert us: to have the conviction that it is God's purpose and will for us that we should triumph over them.]

Nor is their confidence much more sure who rest on that modified form of predestination which teaches men to believe, not, perhaps, that they have been irrespectively and irreversibly preordained to everlasting life, but that having accepted Christ through faith they cannot fail of everlasting life, in consequence of their being among the elect. For although the Bible does most clearly tell us that in the midst of this wicked world there is an elect people; nay, that individuals are elect; yet we must avoid that false security into which so many have been led by not taking heed of the corresponding truth, that these elect may fall from the state of grace in which by God's mercy they have been placed.

The doctrine of an elect people of Christ is almost a necessary result of Christianity being preached in a world some part only of which would receive it. [In some passages, indeed, the term *elect* is used for the whole body of believers, either in the whole church or in its several branches in different parts of the world; the professing as well as the real members thereof, inasmuch as all had been called out of the world by Christ, and had, to all appearance at least, obeyed the call: and these passages have, of course, no definite bearing on the doctrine in question, except so far as they illustrate the meaning of the term: but it is also used in Scripture evidently to denote those who have obeyed the call in reality, and are the chosen and adopted sons of God in Christ.] Nor is there any reason to doubt that these elect have many and great privileges, great and precious promises, of which I do not say they may well be proud, but of which they ought to be gratefully conscious. Blessed indeed is the thought that we are embraced by the arms of God's special mercy and grace; that we are the sons of God, brethren of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost: such thoughts may well lift our souls above this lower world, except so far as we may serve God herein. Blessed is the thought, that for us the mercy of God through Christ is ever ready to forgive, his power ever ready to strengthen; blessed is the thought, that the fountains of grace are ever open to us; such thoughts may well make us ready to embrace this mercy, and use this grace. Blessed is the thought, that in all our spiritual trials the eye and hand of God is over us just as it is over

the affairs of all men in life temporal; that as He sends rain or sun as seemeth Him best for the temporal good of men, so whatever He does is for our spiritual good; such thoughts may well make us careful to see in all things how they are to be spiritually used by us; may well make us submit ourselves wholly to His holy will and pleasure as loyal sons to a loving Father. And more blessed still is the hope, that in the day of judgment we shall be on His right hand; such hopes may well quicken our souls, and steady our wills, and bind them to Christ, and loosen them from the world, to which we feel, as God's elect, that we belong only for a time; but still to these promises and hopes the Holy Spirit has by the Bible joined the awful word *if: If we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end*[a]. And who shall venture to take away the condition which the Holy Spirit has attached to His promises? or if any one is bold enough to do so, what reasonable hope can he have that his sentence will stand? [It is most true, that God after His own good pleasure worketh in us both to will and to do; but we are not on that account the less to work out our own salvation, but rather all the more; for if it were our work and not God's, we might well fold our hands in despair, as those who had been told to move a mountain, or make the shadow go back on the dial. But now that it is God's work in us, God's pleasure for us, we may be sure that our work is not in vain. What we have to do is to submit ourselves to Him who is

[a] Hebr. iii. 14.

at work in our work, and to follow His pleasure: and it can scarcely be too often repeated, it certainly cannot be too constantly remembered, that man's part in the work of his salvation is not the result of his independent active powers of goodness or piety, but of his submission to the Holy Spirit within him; to that expansive Spirit of holiness which turns away from the proud, and works in those who are humble and lowly of heart.] And not only do the direct expressions of Scripture make our final acceptance depend on our final stedfastness, but the same doctrine, that the elect are not so absolutely sure of their salvation as to make themselves or others careless about it, is taught in other passages[b], which will lose their meaning if it is denied. What is the meaning of St. Peter's telling those who had obtained like precious faith with himself, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, and who therefore must have been among the elect, that they were to *make their calling and election sure?* If they were sure already, what need of being more so? if they could make themselves neither more sure nor less sure than they were (as the exaggerated doctrine of election implies), what need of telling them to do that which they could not do? Again, what is the meaning of St. Paul, who, called by Christ's very self, did, in some moments of highest spiritual vision, see clearly the crown of glory, when he expresses his fear lest he should be a cast-away? The persuasion, then, nay, the fact of a man's being among

[b] Compare 1 Thess. i. 4, and v. 9. with several exhortations in the two last chapters.

the elect, even could he be perfectly certain of it. though it may give him hope, cannot by itself give him assurance.

But, nevertheless, the doctrine of perseverance is so laid down in Scripture that it cannot but form a part of comprehensive faith: and Scripture has moreover explained clearly enough its nature and bearing in the passage of St. Peter, where, after exhorting his readers to the progressive acquirement of Christian graces, he adds these words—*for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall*[a]; that is, as long as we retain God in our love; as long as we so use the grace given us that we are fruitful and abound; as long as a sincere, earnest, real endeavour to live after the Spirit is borne witness to by our spiritual growth; so long God will never desert us, or allow the issues of our own hearts, or the temptations of the world, to carry us away from Him; He will bear with our infirmities; He will listen to the sighings of a contrite heart; He will send down the consolations of His Spirit, with the assurances of pardon for Christ's sake; He will make us strong: as long as we are in earnest in the work, Christ will work with us, even unto the end. And this we find in other parts of Scripture. But this is a very different thing from that form of the doctrine of perseverance which sets at nought the texts which speak of the possibility, nay, the danger of our falling, through our hearts being either insensibly or suddenly turned from God. [And we can even so far trace the course of sin as to see how all this may be, if we keep in mind what I have be-

[a] 2 St. Peter i. 10.

fore said—that the submission of the will to the Holy Spirit is the principle of holiness, as far as we are concerned. As long as one who has tasted of the powers of the Gospel keeps his heart in subjection to the Spirit; as long as he desires in very truth to make that Divine Will his will, though he may be sorely tried by temptations, yet will that Spirit ever make a way for him to escape: but let self creep in as the spring of action, as the guide of our wills, then we cast off the Spirit, and though He may strive with us for our own souls, and seek to win us back to Himself and our calling, then are we in immediate danger—though unseen by others, and even unsuspected by ourselves—of falling into those sins, which are falls from grace. As long as the ship obeys her helm, the sailor may see without alarm the fury of the storm; but when the power that guides her is cast off, then hope must be cast off too. When the counsel of the Spirit is put from us as a principle of action, and we begin, even before we commit actual, wilful sin, so far to love sin as to wish it were possible to sin without losing our salvation, then our strength is passing away, and, being left to our own weakness, we straightway fall. And hence the necessity for that daily repentance and forgiveness of even what we may call little sins: for the very smallest sin is, in its degree, an energy of self, and a quenching of the Spirit: a departure from God, which may lead, and, if not counteracted, will lead, to fresh and further transgressions. Or if, casting off the Spirit in another fashion, we think we can stand by our strength, then is the result the same:

and herein is one of the dangers of the exaggerated doctrine of perseverance, that men are taught to trust to themselves, to their calling, to their own supposed spiritual state, rather than to a continued and conscious dependence on God: hence men think that they stand, even while the ground is slipping from under them. Thus does spiritual pride confute and confound itself.]

Nor is there any better scriptural foundation for the notion, that though the elect may fall, yet they are sure to rise again, while the practical encouragement to sin is as great, and even greater: the word which St. Paul used to express the state into which he thought it possible he himself might fall, does not signify a temporary or partial, but a total and final fall. It is certain, however, that as long as our hearts are right before God, as long as there is no secret heart of unbelief, no secret preference of sin, we shall by God be enabled to stand. The spiritual enemies on all sides, the fiery darts of the evil one—whether they take the shape of persecutions and afflictions, as in apostolic times, or of the sorrows, pleasures, aims of life—may well make us afraid, when we think of what we are in ourselves; but still we may gird on our arms and trust in God, knowing that He who is for us is greater than he that is against us; that our weakness will be to His glory who strengtheneth us. And thus faith is the weapon whereby we are to resist the enemy; for faith is not merely the receiving Christ as our Saviour, but clinging to God through Him, heart and soul and will; submitting ourselves

wholly to His holy will and pleasure as given us through the Spirit, and studying to serve and please Him all the days of our life.

[There may perhaps be a point in a believer's spiritual growth where he is past the possibility of sinning, by the Spirit's having complete possession of his whole being: that we acknowledge such a notion is clear, from our surprise when we see one whom we supposed to be righteous fall away: but no one can know himself to be in such a state; the only outward test of it would be his never sinning, even in trifles—for no one can tell where a trifle may lead him—and if we say we do not sin, we deceive ourselves. I need not remind you that the Scripture in which the impossibility of sinning is most emphatically ascribed to perfect faith or holiness, is the first Epistle of St. John; and I think it will be seen that the whole of this Epistle is an emphatic warning against our being contented with our spiritual state, and an exhortation to come nearer to the unattainable perfection whereunto we had been called. The application of the argument is not, "You have the Spirit, and therefore you do not sin;" but, "If you sin, and as far as you sin, you are not so perfect as you may be."]

Nor can they be thought to have any sure or sufficient ground of confidence who are resting entirely or mainly on their fellowship with Christ's visible church on earth. For though Scripture does set forth all true Christians as belonging to that visible body, with visible ministers, word, sacraments; and commands that those who are utterly reprobate should be shut out therefrom, yet she never speaks

of those who are in that body as certain of salvation, nor even as of necessity belonging to the true mystical body of Christ: [and though it is, to say the least, safer and better to be joined to that body which Christ blessed, and promised to be with to the end of the world; to be enclosed in that net which was cast by Christ's apostles at His bidding and by His authority; to be citizens of that commonwealth which was founded by Christ himself; members of that family which can trace up its spiritual ancestry by a long succession, not of clergy only, but of clergy and laity together, to the day of Pentecost, and to the upper chamber at Jerusalem; to eat the same spiritual meat and to drink the same spiritual drink with the saints of old, who saw Christ face to face; to feel that His word and sacraments are ministered to us by those who have commission and authority from Him:—yet all this is not safety; nor can it give us confidence; for all such outward fellowship and privileges may, though they should not, exist without conformity to Christ, without that personal faith in Him which is necessary to Christian assurance.] It is in vain for any one to fancy or to teach, that this is the only, nay, that it is the main point to be considered; that the being reconciled to the visible church, and readmitted to her offices at the last, will place a man among the elect: will be a talisman to apply the merits of Christ to the soul, or to open the gates of heaven to those whose lives have been of the flesh, and not that of the Spirit.

Nor, again, can any true hope be drawn from those austerities or self-abasements whereby some

have thought to assure themselves of heaven. Such things, founded on a wrong view of the great practical doctrine of self-denial, are too apt to give self-denial a shape and a place in the scheme of redemption which is not given to it in Scripture. To mortify the body does not imply the mortification of the carnal mind, much less stand in its place; mere penances can never give assurance of repentance or of faith. It seems to me, that the self-denial which is spoken of in Scripture, as necessary for our being Christ's, is mainly that submission of the flesh to the Spirit of which I have so often spoken. It is not merely the abstaining from particular food on particular days; it is not the being of a sad countenance, and declining amusements and relaxations; it is not withdrawing from social life, and spending one's days within the walls of a convent or the friendless home of the desert: but it is checking, keeping under, mortifying, crucifying the corrupt affections of self, which, alas! spring up within us, whether we fast or feast, whether we turn from God's good things or enjoy them: whether we are in a convent or a court, in a city or a desert. We deny ourselves, i. e. what we by nature are, when we turn away from the suggestions of anger or lust; when we curb our tongues; when we humble our pride. No doubt but that external acts of mortification and abstinence, so far as they promote our powers of self-denial, are agreeable to the spirit of Scripture[b]; but neither is there doubt but that they have, by individuals and churches, been made to stand in place thereof:

[b] See Collect for first Sunday in Lent.

that they have kept thousands from self-denial rather than led them to it. The utmost they can do is to testify to a person's self of his sincerity; and in this they often testify falsely. [They are not so sure a sign of the soul being subdued to the Spirit as Christian bearing amid the trials, troubles and duties of every day life; for as these trifles supply in themselves a less motive to spiritual exertion, the inward spiritual principle must be stronger.] These penances often proceed from that sort of pride which finds pleasure in enduring what others shrink from; as may be seen from the otherwise inexplicable tortures which we read of as inflicted by persons on themselves, without any motive beyond exhibiting their powers of endurance. And moreover they have, in many recorded cases, been mere excuses for continuance in sin, whereby Satan contrives to deprive men's consciences of their sting, and to substitute formal service for real. [What answer do self-inflicted sufferings give to the question, "Am I in the way to be saved?" Not surely the answer of faith, for that puts its whole trust in Christ, as having made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and atonement for any sins of which we repent; and if we repent, such penances savour rather of a mistrust of God's mercy, or may be merely the energies of our human self, thinking that by our own sufferings we may be cleansed, and thus keep us from Christ to whom our repentance should have led us. And if we do not repent, then are they but vain subterfuges of a conscience which knowing its sin, and what are its consequences, yet loving it too well to leave it,

had sooner bear pain and privation than give up the pleasure and self-indulgence which has become a second self. Such devices might suit the heathen, who look upon God as a power of fear, and think that He is a man whom they may cheat; but they do not suit the Christian to whom God is revealed as a God of love, as ready to pardon us, as having pardoned us, without any punishment borne, any satisfaction made, by us: as seeing not our outward pretences only, but the very secrets of our hearts.]

Nor is that reliance much better which is placed wholly on the text, *If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God*[a]; for we know that the heart is deceitful above all things, and to many men speaks peace when there is no peace. It is true that this answer of a good conscience, this approval of our heart, is necessary to the looking forward with real hope to the day of the Lord. How it is that sinners, such as the best of us must ever be, can have the answer of a good conscience, we shall be led to inquire hereafter; suffice it now to say, that we are not saved by works, and therefore works by themselves cannot assure us. And again, how easily do men deceive themselves in this matter: how many men there are, who, measuring their lives by mere human morality, comfort themselves with the thought that they are free from what the world calls sin, and care not to inquire whether they are free likewise from what the Bible calls sin; who know nothing of the energies of Christian life; who mistake the silence of a sleeping soul for the approval

[a] 1 John iii. 21.

of a watchful and sensitive conscience. Strange to say, the more a man has the answer of a good conscience, the more sensitive and dissatisfied with itself does his conscience become, the more does it notice and reprove those things which other men pass over uncared for. The more spotless the sky, the more clearly is every spot discerned. So far from a quiet conscience being a test of saving faith, and hence a source of assurance, there is nothing easier than for a man without faith to satisfy his conscience; in fact, the less the faith, the easier is conscience satisfied; and yet without faith it is impossible to have even a true conception of Christian hope. And again, suppose that a man really had a conscience void of offence towards God and man, what is there in this to save him, unless faith in Christ crucified takes possession of his soul? What sacrifice for sin will his works provide him, if in the pride of spotless morality he think scorn of the blood which was shed? Much then must be added to a good conscience before it can speak to us the assurance which we seek.

But still less can any comfort rise up from the answer of a bad conscience, from our souls being burdened with the memory of some great sin; nor yet from an uneasy consciousness that we are sinners, joined to an involuntary recognition of the fact that Christ died to save sinners, forced upon us by the general belief of the world around; for there are two sorts of this consciousness of sin—one is a necessary element of faith, the other is a direct negation of it. And though the love of Christ for sinners, His death for sinners, is the foundation of all Christ-

ian hope, and is written in characters of light on every page of Scripture, yet another truth is found side by side with it, not less bright than the other, yet often seemingly dark and threatening to those who read not Scripture aright—that the real will of this love is, that those whom He loves, and who name His name, should fly from and conquer sin. And hence a sense of our being sinners cannot be a source of true comfort to us, unless we obey that His will for us. Those who try to take the one truth without the other; who persuade themselves or others that His love will accept them simply because they are sinners, without their leaving their sin, cannot be said to have a scriptural foundation for their assurance, but rather to most fearfully misread the message of mercy, and despise the longsuffering of God, which leads them to repentance. Do they say they believe in Christ? Mere belief will not justify them. We are expressly told that Simon Magus believed, and yet was in the bond of iniquity: he believed in Christ perhaps so far as to see in Him a possible way of preserving and increasing his own power and fame; but he did not believe on Him as He was preached by the apostles; and this is the case with those who look on Christ merely as a means of their living their own way in the world with impunity. Those who fancy that turning to Christ is nothing more than being saved while in unrepented sin may do well to ponder His words, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

Much less can we receive those still greater perverters of the great doctrine, that all men are sinners, and that for sinners Christ has died, who would have it believed that past deeds of darkness are the surest warrant for their being now children of light, elect of God; who say not only, "My sins have made me a fitter object of God's mercy—my pardon is a greater miracle of God's redeeming love"—which in very truth it is—but "my sins have actually made me more sure of my being Christ's than I should have been without them;" who, in the echoes of former unholy lusts and unbridled passions, and in the avenging voice of self-condemnation, can hear nothing but the harmonies of heavenly hope. Surely such men would turn funeral bells into merry chimes, and see hope and health in the fixed eye and pale wan face of death.

And not only so, but often they even cast scorn and despair on the spiritual state of those, who, having from their youth up striven as far as might be *to make their calling and election sure*, have in no time of their lives felt the agonies of despair or the conviction of being outcasts from the covenant into which they were through faith baptized.

It is true, indeed, that the conviction of present or the remembrance of past sin, need not (thanks be to God for his unspeakable mercy) keep any one from hopefully turning to Christ in repentance unto faith, and seeking from Him that which repentance and faith are sure to find—acceptance and renewal. We cannot repeat too often our Saviour's invitation to those who travail or are heavy

laden; we may impress upon the most fallen God's love for sinners, His will that men should not perish, in order to move them to come to Him; we may tell such a one of the joy in heaven over the one piece of silver, the single sheep—great truths, in which all our consolation lies: we may endeavour to animate his faith, and quicken his hope, and kindle his love, by holding these gospel truths before him. The salvation of sinners is most assuredly one object of Christ's coming upon earth; but will any one with the Bible in his hand say, that the promotion of practical holiness of heart and life is not another? We may not so teach the one as to destroy the other; we may not, consistently with Scripture, throw around the murderer's head, when his life is forfeited to his country's justice, a brighter glory than we give to the saint, whose faith has been tried and proved by the fiery trials of life. It is true the greater the sinner the greater his need of God's mercy, but the mere conviction that he is a sinner cannot make him sure that he has entered in by the straight gate, or even left the broad way, for the conscience even of sinners is not dumb. It is true also, that the remembrance of past sins may, when the sacred love of Christ has once been kindled, well make it burn more unceasingly and intensely, as in the woman whose many sins were forgiven; but still in themselves these are no warrant for believing that the love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts; for this implies something real and practical; a real subjection of our hearts and affections and wills and passions to Him, of which the remembrance of sin is no

sign. Where in Scripture do we find that sin, even committed ignorantly, is the seal of salvation? much less when it has been persevered in, in spite of grace and opportunities and professions. It may be the occasion of the manifestation of God's love; the disease calls forth the physician's skill, and, it may be, the patient's gratitude for his cure; but who would point to his bed of sickness, to his once wasted limbs and exhausted nerves, as a proof that he is now in perfect health and strength? It was not so with St. Paul; he does not rest his sure hope of mercy on the great sin of his early life, but on Christ's love for sinners and on his having fought the good fight. He was the chiefest of sinners, and therefore with good reason magnified God's mercy; but it was in consequence of his labours of love, not of his former preeminence in sin, that he knew himself to be not a whit behind the chiefest of the Apostles. It is true that publicans and harlots pressed into the kingdom of God before the self-righteous Pharisee, or the infidel Sadducee, equally sinful, though in a different way, with themselves: but not without repentance, nor yet before Simeon or Anna, or Peter or John. It was surely no heinous sin that opened the door for Cornelius; but his prayers and alms, which went up for a memorial before God. True hope is not the reflection of the avenging fire which waits on sin, but of the Sun of righteousness, which, in spite of sin, dawns on that repentance which ends in faith.

And hence it cannot be safe to place assurance on those agonized professions of faith which so often mark

the death-bed of one who has all his life avowedly been merely a nominal Christian. This is no sure sign of saving faith, no sure sign of repentance. It were needless to remind you of the numberless cases in which seemingly death-bed professions, when tested by the return of health and strength, have been found to pass away as specks of light in a tempest. True faith forbids us to doubt that as the pale form of death stands by the bedside of the faithful, and brings him the message that he is to come to God, his soul will oftentimes break into fervent ejaculations, cries of passionate devotion, earnest entreaties for mercy, undoubting expressions of trust, sure visions of glory; yet these ejaculations, if they are to express hope, must rise from something better than the immediate pressure of death. Sorrow for sin, to give witness of saving faith, must be something more than the maddening feeling of remorse which sinful pleasures are wont to leave in the soul when ebbing life bears witness to their being pleasures no more. Expressions of faith must be something more than the mere echo of despair which is making merry in the soul—more than the mere convulsive catching of a drowning man at what the world holds out to him as a substitute for Christianity—more than the mere repetition of formal professions. Those who trust to such, or teach others to do so, must take the texts which speak of the salvation of sinners without those which speak of repentance and fighting the good fight, and the judgment of men good and bad, and the account which every man must give of his works in this life, whether they be of the flesh or of the

Spirit. And whence do they get authority so to hold or interpret one passage of Scripture that it shall destroy others?

God forbid that any limits should be placed to the Divine mercy, save those which He Himself has placed—it were the act of a suicide to do so; but neither may we represent His mercy otherwise than He has revealed it. And it seems to me that Scripture gives us no warrant to speak of those who thus depart this life, as we may of those whose light has shone before men; whose faith is not at the best a mere possibility, hidden from our eyes, but a reality, as far as we can see or conclude. God forbid too that any doubt should in such moments be thrown upon the soul which, on the brink of eternity, is already in an agony of doubt. We may pray, we may hope, we may exhort him to look to Christ as his only Saviour; in Him to put his trust; to lay aside all that shuts him out from Christ; to repair injuries, to forgive enemies, and the like; we may leave the issue in God's hand, not perhaps without hope; but surely we cannot say he is safe; nor can we, when he is gone, hold him up as a shining light; for we cannot conceal from ourselves, we may not conceal from others—lest we bring ourselves and them to the same miserable end—that in order to be saved by the Saviour we must come to Him with changed hearts: not as Judas came, not as Simon Magus came, not even as the willing rich young man came; not only from terror of the punishment of hell fire, but in grief for the burden, impatience of the evil, abhorrence of the pleasures of sin; not merely with a dead,

but with a living faith—the faith of the whole heart, not merely of part of it. And what if sin has got such possession of the dying man, that it will not let him go?—for often one of the results of sin is, that it binds a man in chains too strong to break. When a man turns in health, he can tell, and we can in some degree tell, whether his faith is real or false; but the actual state of the soul of one who only turns from sin at the last, no one knows but God; we have no means of testing it; all that we do know of him is, that his life has been spent in wilful rejection of the Holy Ghost, wilful despite of Christ. In the midst of light he has preferred darkness, because his deeds were evil; we cannot tell whether his turning to Christ is the returning of the will in love, or merely of the reason in fear. In good truth, the profession of such persons very often bears witness against themselves; it is very seldom that it wears the calm, assured features of real faith in such extremity. There is very seldom the calm confidence which breathes in the words, *Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.* Nor does the thief on the cross afford any real parallel to such cases; his case would be found in that of a heathen who had not known or heard of Christ till his very last, and then turned to Him in love and faith. The parallel to the death-bed of the ungodly Christian would have been exhibited to us, if it had been Judas Iscariot who hung on the cross beside the Lord whom he had betrayed.

Nor can a man rest with confidence on having partaken in any of the outward privileges of religion;

such as Baptism, or the Lord's Supper; nor on going to Church; nor sermon-hearing; nor knowledge of the Bible; nor again, on being deeply and sensibly moved by Divine things when forcibly brought before him. Faith is not the feverish excitement of an hour, which is mostly a sign of spiritual sickness, but the steady pulse of life. The Jews were strongly excited by our Saviour's entry into Jerusalem, and welcomed Him as their King with palms and hosannahs, and yet it was all unreal; for within five days they cried out, *Crucify Him! Crucify Him!*

Nor can assurance be a witness to itself; no one can safely say he is sure because he is sure; if he is sure, it will shew itself in a thousand ways; in his life; his conversation; his acts without; in his tempers, counsels, wishes within.

If then true scriptural assurance waits on none of these simply and separately, the question is, Whence does it spring? comprehensive faith answers readily, From each and all together as far as they are scriptural; from the spiritual life as distinguished from and yet containing and implying the moral life; comprising within itself a deep, humble, contrite sense of and sorrow for our sin and sinfulness; the earnest and practical energies of repentance; full belief in all that the Scripture tells of God and ourselves; love of God and man; a striving after all the graces of Christian holiness; earnest self-denial of our carnal wills and passions; the practical energies of good works; a deep gratitude for His will that we should be saved, with an earnest zeal in making our calling and election sure, and a full belief that if we watch

and pray, God will surely finish the good work He hath begun, and bring us to everlasting life through Christ; an earnest looking to Christ; a deep faith in Him; full reliance on Him and His atonement by the sacrifice offered on the cross; none on ourselves or our works; full conviction that He has both the will and the power to save us; nay, that He has saved us: with a loving remembrance of all that He has done for us, and, above all, of His death for us. These elements may differ in different minds, but none may be absent, because all are scriptural: one must ever hold the chiefest place—deep love towards Him, arising as well from His infinite perfections, as from a deep sense of what He has wrought for us and in us—and to such an assurance it is God's will, unless we reject His will, that all who are called shall come.

And all this is very briefly but forcibly set forth in the words of my text, *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God:* for herein are evidently two elements of assurance: first, the witness of the Spirit, and next the witness of our own hearts: both are required to a true witness: if the witness of our own spirit be true, the Spirit beareth witness with it; if it be false, the Spirit is silent: if that which is outwardly the witness of the Spirit be so indeed, then will our spirits bear witness to it; if it be not, then will our spirits be unmoved and listless, and we may know that the Spirit does in reality bear no witness to our salvation.

The witness of our own spirit consists in various emotions and energies of our souls, which may be

classed under reason or the feelings: and each of these, though differing in degree in different cases, will nevertheless be held by comprehensive faith to have its place in real assurance.

First, there is the witness of our reason when we find within ourselves that our reason submits to the mysteries of God's revealed Word; a firm intellectual assent to and persuasion of the truth of the mysteries which God has revealed to us, and, above all, of the sacrifice of His Son. Hence it is said in Scripture, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself*[c]. On this no doubt must ever cast its shadow, or, if it be ever cast by the tempter, must quickly be repelled, and pass away before the brightness and certainty of the Gospel revelation.

And next, this apprehension and conviction of the Gospel mysteries must pass from our reason into our feelings, for it *is with the heart that man believeth unto salvation:* and must not only bring those various feelings into subjection to itself, but must awaken them to higher objects and energies. The believer must believe, not only that Christ died for all mankind, but that He died for him personally and individually. The gospel-history must fall on his ears as a message which brings to his very self the tidings of pardon and peace; and thence there will naturally arise a grateful confidence that Christ has died for him, has cleansed his soul, has washed away his sins, has restored him to the love of the Father, has placed him among His elect, has made him an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; and then in

[c] 1 St. John v. 10.

his heart necessarily there will spring up, as water from the earth, a deep love of God, a casting of all our care upon Him, a sense of being adopted by Him, of being by Him preordained to everlasting life. A man may well feel himself lifted somewhat above his fleshly and mortal self by such thoughts and persuasions as these; some of warmer temperament may well feel themselves in an ecstasy; while in others of a colder and more practical mould, their love and peace in believing may be of a less tumultuous sort, but not less deep or pure for that.

And perhaps the more ecstatic witness of the feelings may wait on those who after a long course of sin find themselves by God's infinite mercy awakened to repentance and faith; just as one who is rescued from shipwreck, or drawn back from the edge of a precipice, has a more lively sense of deliverance, than those who have been preserved from day to day without death thus threatening them face to face; though in reality they owe their life to the same Providence. We read in Scripture [b] of two persons standing before our Lord, to one of whom our Lord says much had been forgiven, to the other comparatively little—it is true it is a parable, but it seems to apply directly to the two persons then in our Lord's presence.—The assurance of both was the same. The sins of both were forgiven, and they knew it. She to whom many sins were forgiven showed her joy after a fashion which seemed strange to the disciple who had never known what it was to have passed from *utter* wretchlessness of unclean

[b] St. Luke vii. 41.

living to the knowledge of Christ. Our Saviour did not by this parable so much find fault with Simon's lack of sensible emotion, as with his finding fault with her who ceased not to show her joy;—a lesson for those who think that all such transports of joy are either self-deception or deceit.

It may not, however, be denied, that in this witness of the feelings men easily and readily deceive themselves; and therefore to it must be added the witness of the Spirit; and since the power to bear fruit meet for our calling, to make a fruitful use of our spiritual blessings and privileges, to do good works pleasing and acceptable to God, can be the work of no other save the Holy Spirit within us, it follows that a life of faithful obedience, our walking after the Spirit and not after the flesh, brings with itself the witness of the Spirit: it is a witness that the Spirit is with us. It is not safe to trust to mere spiritual emotions or convictions; we must test their reality by seeing whether our life is that of the Spirit; whether He is abiding in us in power; whether in daily events, as they come before us, He puts into our minds holy desires, good counsels, and enables us to bring the same to good effect; whether the means of grace are effectual upon us; whether we have the power of prayer: if not, then is the witness of the Spirit against us, and not for us; the witness of our reason or our feelings is a delusion; our spirit beareth witness alone; and being alone, its witness is unreal.

And, on the other hand, if the answer of a good conscience, the witness of good works, stands alone,

then it, too, being alone, is a delusion. If a man never feels himself moved by the high and noble thoughts, aspirations, hopes, assurances, which wait, more or less, on Christian faith; if he never feels the love of God and Christ; if he never feels his soul beat quicker as he thinks of Christ having died for him; if his obedience is a cold, formal matter; if he prides himself upon it, and thinks scorn of those who are less able to resist temptation than himself; then may he know that his obedience is hiding Christ from him, even as He was hid from the Pharisees. He may be sure that he yet needs to be especially renewed in the spirit of his mind; to look to his sins, rather than to his obedience, in order that a true sense of what he is, and what he needs, may give him somewhat of the spirit of the woman who had been a sinner.

For thus it is that a sense of sin, which is sometimes made the sole ground of assurance, is a necessary element in it: first, because it makes us put our trust in Christ; next, because it makes us sensible of what He has done for us; and thus, by the spiritual power which God has given us, makes our love more quick and active; not the sense of sin unrepented and continued in, but the sense of sin forgiven and abandoned; for sin unrepented and continued in, sin unconquered, comes as a dark cloud between us and Christ, and hides Him from us. Every such sin perils our salvation, not only by putting us out of covenant with God, and exposing us to His wrath, but by weakening and de-

stroying our faith and assurance in Him. Faith looks at our Saviour as our Advocate, not less than our Judge. Disobedience in its first beginnings weakens this holy confidence, and in its end destroys it. At first it seems to us as if our Saviour's loving eye was turned in sorrow and pity on His children as they begin to go astray. He calls to them, and tries to win them back; but as sin follows on sin, and at last the dark waters close over the soul, then the wrath of the Judge seems to speak to us from the eyes which to faith beam with love. We may still, indeed, hold ourselves to be Christians, but it will be in the spirit of bondage, not in the *spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

And hence, combined with this sense of sin, there must be that answer of a good conscience which seems at first sight to be incompatible with it: it seems a hard saying, that we must be sinners, and yet must be saints: and yet so it is; though one of these truths or the other is lost sight of in too many religious systems of the present day. Even supposing the two were to us incompatible, both are laid down in Scripture, and therefore must find a place in any true portraiture of our faith. But they are not only not incompatible, but are even closely connected; for the answer of a good conscience is not the consciousness of any excellence in ourselves, or of ourselves, but of our will being in subjection to the Holy Spirit; free from the dominion, though not free from the presence of sin. In ourselves we are weak, blind, easily deceived, full of evil desires

and lusts, disinclined to real good, and therefore sinful; in almost every thing we do even well, we can trace either the impulses of evil overruled by grace, or the motions of grace opposed and hindered by the flesh. All that our conscience can tell us of any good in us is, that we are yielding ourselves to Him who is perfect good, as far as our weakness will admit: and therein are by Him kept from much that is evil, and enabled to do something that is good, though imperfectly, and even sinfully in respect of the element of sin, which our fleshly nature introduces into all we do: and this may easily be tested by the experience of any one who takes the trouble to analyse his heart and actions. Thus the answer of a good conscience, the actual deeds of a holy life, so far from contradicting our sense of sin, do in reality set it forth and illustrate it; for our holiness is sin overpowered by grace. And further, we must distinguish between those which are called sins of infirmity: which even where the Spirit is in power, spring up from the weakness, or weariness, or carelessness, or hastiness of human nature; and those which come from the heart; where the Spirit is absent and the flesh reigns supreme. The one sort do not destroy our assurance, for if we say we are free from them, the truth is not in us. The other sort, according to their degree and frequency, are signs of our falling or having fallen from a state of grace [a].

Nor, again, can this assurance be generally so com-

[a] Whitehall Sermons, on "Sins of Infirmity," p. 119, sqq.

plete but that some doubt must yet remain; not, indeed, doubt of God's mercy and love, or of our having been called by Him to the adoption of sons, but of our being able to continue stedfast unto the end: perfect love, indeed, casteth out fear; but where in this life shall we find perfect love? St. Paul, when speaking of himself or to others, counts not himself or them to have apprehended, but presses forward towards the prize, and urges them so to run that they obtain.

We must, indeed, ever doubt, when we look at ourselves, and think on the many temptations which beset us; the evil which is around, ready to lead us wrong; the evil which is within, ready to follow therein. We must ever distinguish between the doubt which arises from this sense of our own frailty and sin, and that which springs from the secret conviction that in our hearts and lives we are God's enemies rather than his children; that we are walking after the flesh, and not after the Spirit: the one brightens into hope; the other deepens into fear: the one is the fruit of holy humility, and that distrust of ourselves which is part of our assurance in Christ; the other is the sentence of conscience, in anticipation of the day of judgment, when the Saviour will say to those who work iniquity, *Depart from me, I know you not.*

And I would again remind you that assurance is not always the same in kind or degree to all; the elements are variously mixed. In one soul, the witness of our own spirit, the deep energies of a spiritualized reason, or the sensible emotions of spiritualized feel-

ings, will be most prominent, though not to the exclusion of the answer of a good conscience. Others will commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing: not trusting therein, or priding themselves therein, but blessing God for that they can in their lives of Christian faith find that sufficient evidence of their being Christ's which they in vain look for, and perhaps long for, in their reason or their feelings.

And as this assurance must vary in kind and degree in different sorts of men, so must it also in different stages of life. In early childhood, when the soul first learns to trust in Christ crucified, and to look up to Heaven as its home: while the evil of the world, with its selfish pleasures and unworthy temptations, is yet hid from our eyes—we are able to rest with undoubting confidence on the truths which we have heard and received. The child rests in his Father's bosom, in love and hope. As life calls the youth or man into the busy temptations and distractions of life, as new pleasures solicit him, new desires unfold themselves, he cannot but fear for himself, lest he be led away to destruction, as thousands have been, and are, before our very eyes. Here his assurance will show itself to him in an ever present belief of the realities of his spiritual existence, a deep sense of his own unworthiness: in earnest trust in Christ; earnest seeking after and use of grace: an earnest performance of the duties of love towards God and man: in an earnest and fearful struggle against those things which will bring him into captivity to the law of the members, and turn him from that love and grace which he is gratefully

conscious have hitherto held him up. And as he thus goes on in life, his assurance increases day by day. As each temptation resisted, each sinful desire subdued, each duty performed, bears witness to the presence of the Holy Spirit within, something is daily added to his hope, as the strong man stores up the spoil from the battle, or the covetous man adds gold to his gains. And as his faith keeps its ground, and waxes stronger, not only will his present security in Christ increase, but it will throw itself more and more into the future: so that at the last the Spirit does completely bear witness with his spirit, and he looks for death as the messenger which is to carry him to his rest first, and then to his crown; as he traces through life the predestinating will of God leading and holding him up by mercies and by trials, his faith brightens into undoubting assurance and almost fearless hope, and the old man once more trusts as the loving, fearless, child. The hill, which, when he began his journey seemed so far off, is now brought within his sight, and he can almost see the walls and count the towers of the heavenly Jerusalem; not that he is even yet content with his faith or his assurance; he whose faith and assurance are strongest knows most surely that if they seem strong enough, if they do not increase, they are insecure and unreal: inexpressibly thankful that he sees so much, that he can hope so much, he is still yearning, still praying to see more, still striving to hope more; and this is the gift of God to the obedient faith of the godly;—how different from the wages of sin to the sinner! how different from the struggles of death-bed repentance!

And if we wish that this assurance shall wait on us, either in our active life or in our quiet age, or on our death-bed, come when it will, we must recollect that as our assurance must spring from the death of Christ for us sinners, so whatever sin weakens or destroys our personal union with Him, in the same degree weakens or destroys our assurance. Falling away from a godly childhood to a godless youthhood; wilful, beloved, unrepented sins; nay, even sins of infirmity if not repented of and watched; self-indulgence; amusements, if they degenerate into self-indulgence and luxury and forgetfulness of our calling and election—all such energies of the flesh coming over our souls, and wrapping them in darkness, hide Christ from our view, as the mists which rise from earth obscure the glorious sun. If we find ourselves forgetting our Christian profession as embodied in our baptismal vows; if we find ourselves deaf to those warnings which the Holy Spirit gives us by our reason, our memory, our hope; if we find ourselves unwilling or unable to pray; if we feel a secret wish to turn from the holy communion; if the high and noble motions and desires of the Spirit seem strange and foolish to us; if we love to explain away the higher and nobler functions of the Christian life, we may fear lest the axe be laid to the root of the tree; for we may be sure that we are not *renewed in the spirit of our mind;* that we have not *put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

# LECTURE VII.

EPHESIANS iv. 23, 24.

*Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

THE blessings which wait upon the Christian are not confined to the future; even in this life he has an inestimable advantage over other men. While they are obliged to wait for their happiness upon the tide of human affairs—to be humble suitors to the world for what it has to give, the Christian rides triumphantly over the troublesome waves, and uses the world as his servant instead of bowing down to it as his master. That which is commonly most valued and sought for in life has for him but a value and an interest as it subserves the higher interests in which and for which he has his being. His whole course is a puzzle to the man of the world; it seems trackless and aimless; but in reality his path, though unseen save by the spiritual eye, unknown save to the spiritual mind, is far more marked and certain than any of the highways of life—more

secure too and more happy; for from every step he takes, instead of care and vexation there spring up joy and peace; fleshly sorrows do not destroy his peace of mind, fleshly trials do not weary him; they are but petty annoyances, which are scarcely felt by those who are travelling with eager and certain hope towards a long-desired much-loved home, in company with a much-loved all-trusted guide—he is walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

When we look into the nature and origin of this spiritual life, from which alone, as we have seen, springs the assurance necessary to justifying faith, we shall find that most if not all of the conflicting views on this subject are really embodied in the comprehensive faith and definite teaching of our Church. Each of these views by itself takes some particular aspect, some particular part of the spiritual life, some particular stage of the spiritual growth, as the complete and only development of which the man in Christ is capable; as if a physician were to draw his science from one class of patients alone, and to suppose that death was in all cases produced by the same causes, and to be met by the same remedies.

In considering the beginnings of the spiritual life, we must try to trace how the Spirit works herein: for whatever degree of religious perfection we may attain unto, it is solely by His dwelling in us as the Spirit of life, and by His omnipotent power moulding what we are or what we have to the work of our calling; hence the motions of our merely rational being give us a very inadequate idea of the motions

of our spiritual being; so the various powers of the physical world—the gigantic forces of steam—the irresistible strength of water—the subtle fluid of electricity, are by themselves powerless for the purposes of man for which they now seem designed; but when the spirit of man takes possession of them, working in and by them, then do they assume almost the energies of life, the functions of animate beings; they seem by their own inherent power to produce results which affect the destinies of the whole world, and which were undreamt of till human invention made them what they are; their full nature is only known by viewing them through the medium of human genius and skill. Thus if we wish to know the powers of the spiritual life, we must see how the Holy Spirit acts upon and directs the various parts of our nature, which without Him have no life in them.

Now one function of the Holy Spirit in making us spiritually alive is to impress upon the soul a conviction of the truth of the Christian Revelation, so as either to give the general desire for salvation a definite direction towards Christ, or to awaken that desire by making us feel that Christ has died for us. In the early church this conviction of the truth of Christianity was sometimes impressed upon willing men by supernatural signs and wonders, as in the case of Cornelius; but now, it is generally by the word, the foolishness of preaching and teaching, that the Spirit works in putting before us the various mysteries and promises and precepts of the Gospel. And without doubt those who listen to Scripture

with attentive and willing hearts do feel therein the influences of the Holy Spirit working upon them, and creating in their souls spiritual desires and counsels: the word preached can scarcely fail to be unto them a well of water springing up unto everlasting life, food come down from heaven; for we must bear in mind that the words of the Bible are in outward form alone the words of man; within they are the very breath of the Spirit speaking through human lips. Where this word is received as God's word, there it naturally works as of God to the quickening of our souls; and thus are Christians said to be begotten of the word; hence the preaching of the Gospel is in one view the commencement of the spiritual life.

But this does not supersede Baptism; for the spiritual life cannot actually, or properly speaking, begin, till we have been taken out of the state of nature into grace by the formal acceptance and application to ourselves of the merits of Christ; and hence when the believing child of Adam has in Baptism been definitely admitted to the place and privileges of a Christian, has therein been sacramentally and figuratively, though for spiritual purposes really, buried into His death, then does the Holy Spirit coincidently with this death of the old man come into our souls as the Spirit of the new man. A new birth takes place; we are born again, in that by this indwelling of the Spirit we have new powers and tendencies proper for the life of the Christian, as in our natural birth we have the

powers and tendencies proper for the life of the man; and thus are we born again in Baptism—thus is Baptism the commencement of the spiritual life.

But the nature and functions of this Sacrament are so manifold, and so much confused in the theological disputes of the day, that it is necessary to examine this rather more closely, and to distinguish between the essence of Baptism and its antecedents and results: the former will be in every case the same, the latter will vary somewhat according to persons and circumstances.

And firstly, we learn from Scripture that in Baptism there is remission of sins through the application of Christ's merits by faith; the believer is therein identified with Christ, and being spiritually nailed with Him to the cross, pays thereon the penalty of his sins both original and actual; so that, secondly, his relation to God is changed, he is no longer an enemy and rebel, but a son and a coheir with Christ. And thirdly, the old man, whereby he was held in captivity to sin[a], that whereby sin was his master, being dead, he is now set free to work things pleasing and acceptable to God, and is bound not to allow Satan to regain his dominion over him. And fourthly, when he is thus freed from the dominion of sin, there rises up from the grave of the old man, by the power of the resurrection of Christ, the new man, after the pattern of Christ, that is, the Spirit of God clothing Himself upon our natural being; and if we were at liberty to follow out the

[a] Rom. vii. 6.

figurative reasoning strictly, we should say that, the old man being thus dead, the evil lusts which belong to the old man would wholly perish; but Scripture tells us they remain, and therefore we see that this logically true analogy cannot be carried further; the evil tendencies are still in us, but in consequence of the power of grace they are not the supreme or active principles as before. But the existence of evil within us is not incompatible with a spiritual state, for even before the Fall, Eve, as well as Adam, was liable to evil desires, and by admitting them fell. Yet Satan is no longer our tyrant; he comes again only as the cunning tempter, trying to seduce us into allowing him to regain his throne.

And if we look to the conditions of Baptism being thus effectual unto our partaking of the sanctifying and regenerating influences of the Spirit, we shall see that in the adult at least there must be a definite sense and weariness and dislike of sin—a belief in and acceptance of Christ as the sacrifice for sin, as the Mediator and Priest between God and man,—a renunciation of ourselves and our works—and a general belief in the promises and mysteries of revelation, as far as they have by the ministry of the word been brought before us. There need not indeed be good works, for of these in their Christian sense the man is not yet capable; and in their heathen sense God may have drawn him to Himself without them; a man may turn to God in heart and desire, and straightway be baptized, as in the case of St. Paul and others, of whom we read in

Scripture; but there must always be that change in our notions of our nature, our good, our pleasures, our happiness—in our views of the world and its belongings; of ourselves, our aims and destinies, which is usually termed *repentance*—and where this repentance whereby we forsake sin, and this faith whereby we steadfastly believe the promises of God, are possible, and as far as they are possible, there are they requisite before a man can be justified, and therefore of course before he can be born again unto newness of life by water and the Spirit.

So again in an adult the results are immediate and sensible, unless there be in him something which hinders the proper operation of the sacrament, so that it becomes merely a fruitless outward sign, without any inward grace: whatever he has, it is clothed upon by the Spirit and turned to God; his powers and tendencies of mind and heart, being in full activity, straightway move in the new and heavenly path which is opened for them; his reason apprehends Christ; his will obeys Him; his imagination passes to the invisible world; his desires and hopes rise to heaven; old things have passed away, and he is become a new creature, in active possession of those spiritual powers which have been engrafted on his natural being in its full developement and strength; he thinks, reasons, desires, acts as a man born again of Christ into a new sphere of desire, thought, and action; his regeneration may be tested in his life and conversation.

But where neither these conditions nor these

results are possible, there of course they are not required before nor to be looked for after the ordinance; and therefore in the baptism of infants this regeneration is the sole gift and act of God; His sole gift not only in the sense of our having done nothing to procure or deserve it, but without any desire, wish, belief, preceding on the part of the recipient. Nor can its results be visible or tested by thought and action, because the child has not yet begun to think or act, at least so as to be discernible to us. And this brings me to a part of the subject which cannot be approached without trembling, lest I should add fuel to the fire, even while wishing to do something towards extinguishing it.

And first, it will I presume be allowed, that wherever Baptism is spoken of in Scripture in connection with the new birth, there is no limitation excepting infants from its operation; we must see whether there is any Scriptural warrant for limiting it more than it is limited in Scripture?

I cannot help thinking that the objections to infant regeneration arise partly from applying human reasoning to Scripture revelation, and partly from supposing that certain Scripture truths are incompatible with the doctrine, and therefore prove it to be unscriptural. I believe it will be found, that in reality each and all have an independent place in Scripture, as the facts which they represent have a definite function in our salvation; are each and all taught in the Bible as they are recognised in the comprehensive faith of our church. I cannot, for instance, see any reason why the Scripture language

on Baptism should be explained away or limited from any jealousy lest it should interfere with that personal religion which is taught in every page of the Bible. Baptismal regeneration, so far from excluding or neutralizing any one requisite of spiritual life, does in reality point to, and enforce them. There can be no stronger reason for living spiritually than having from the beginning received spiritual life. There is much more danger lest persons should fancy themselves relieved from the obligations to this Divine life, from supposing that their new birth is something yet to come.

Nor is there any weight in an argument which attempts to overthrow the doctrine in question by saying that, as no one can be regenerate without faith, and infants are not capable of having faith, therefore they cannot be regenerate; this reasoning is fallacious. By an exactly similar argument it might be said, No one can be saved without faith; infants cannot have faith; and therefore infants cannot be saved—a conclusion which I need not occupy your time by disproving. The position on which the argument is founded must be qualified in order to be true; no one *who is capable of faith* can be regenerate or saved without it—and the bearing of the one premiss thus stated is evidently destroyed by the other.

The reasoning, such as it is, might easily be turned against those who introduce it, by saying that no one can be saved who is not regenerate; and therefore baptised infants, being saved[a], must be regenerate.

[a] See the Rubric at the end of the Baptismal Service.

But how are they able to assert that a child has not faith? Who shall tell what are the secret motions of an infant soul, where the Holy Spirit deigns to dwell? Who shall say what visions of heavenly things float across it—visions which, if they exist at all, are not the less clear or less glorious because the reason has not yet begun to stir, or because the world of sense has not yet sullied the mirror? Who shall say what visions crossed the souls of those whom Christ blessed [b]? who shall say what is in the soul of the poorest and weakest infant? Ask Philosophy, she is dumb; ask your own memories, and they answer not.

But leaving this, on which it is impossible to make any certain assertion on one side or the other, we may allow for a moment that an infant cannot have faith; but this does not prove that an infant cannot be regenerate; for we must not confound the power of life with the life itself; the energies and functions of the body—feeling, motion, breathing—with that which is the secret principle of them all, the breath of life, whereby man becomes a living soul. And so in spiritual things, we must not confound the principle or power of spiritual life with the exhibitions and workings thereof, either within or without. Regeneration is not faith or hope or charity, but that which enables us to form and possess and enjoy those graces, that whence these graces spring, the new power of life, the presence of the Holy Spirit. The essence of this regeneration is,

[b] Mark x. 16.

that this Spirit takes possession of our being as far as it is developed, and works in us as far as we are capable of working; and hence there is a material difference between our judgment of the regeneration of an adult and that of a child[c]. In the former case, as I have before observed, the several parts and powers, being more or less in active exercise, are spiritualised coincidently with the act of regeneration: so that faith, hope and charity must be in a greater or less degree the immediate results and tests of the inpouring of the Spirit, and hardly to be distinguished from it. But this is not the case, as far as we can see, in the child; he has little else than faculties and tendencies which do not at once, and may never, exhibit themselves in act; and therefore the absence of visible fruits of the Spirit is in this case no proof of the absence of His regenerating presence, as it would be in the case of the adult. For an infant may be, as far as his undeveloped nature admits, as really a new creature as the saint who dies in the full stature of Christ. The powers of life are as real in the unconscious child as in the giant beneath whose step the earth trembles.

Nor again, as it seems to me, is that argument more conclusive, which is drawn from the actual workings of the child's heart, when, as life goes on, they become discernible. "This child," they say, "cannot be regenerate: look at the actual motions "of the unregenerate man in him; look at the work-

[c] See Davison on Baptismal Regeneration.—Quarterly Review, vol. XV. 475 sqq.

" ing of Adam's sinfulness; self-will breaking out " into disobedience; watch his struggles to get his " own way; his wayward tempers, his selfishness, " and even lusts making their presence felt before " their time." Yes, my brethren, true enough; but see also how a careful parent, by prayer and watching, can call into existence the struggles against self and the flesh, whence in course of time result the Christian graces of self-denial and self-control; how, even in a wayward child, the energies of prayer, and of love of Christ, a trust in Him, a desire for heaven, a wish to be good for Christ's sake, can be awakened; whence comes this power of resistance to evil, of motions towards good? from nature? surely not: there is no principle in nature of denying self for righteousness' sake, whatever there may be of forming the virtues which are in fashion in the world. Surely in this we can trace the operation of the grace of God's ordinance, of which Scripture speaks, the being born again of water and the Spirit; the renewal by the Spirit in the washing of regeneration, working in him so as to bring the law of the members into captivity to the law of the mind.

Others again point to baptized persons, and urge, with but too much truth, that they belong not to the new birth, but to the old: and were it true, that the having been regenerated necessarily implies a present spiritual life—were it true, that having been once born again unto righteousness, we could not become again dead in trespasses and sins, the argument would be conclusive. The proper result

indeed, of having received the Spirit in infancy is, that as our being expands day by day in the successive stages of life, each power, each tendency, each affection, as it unfolds, should yield itself to the Divine life, and become a Christian grace; but we have already seen that the human will is free to accept or reject the spiritual influences which are offered to it, and that even after the entrance of the Holy Spirit into the soul the flesh strives to turn us from Him to itself: and therefore we cannot argue, from the present carnal life of any baptized person, that he has never received the new birth unto faith and good works, any more than we can argue from a man's sickness or death that he never was born.

It is, however, urged by some, that if the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit has taken place in the soul, it is impossible to conceive that the work of that infinite and omnipotent Being can ever be undone: to these it is sufficient to answer, that it is no sound theology to set aside the statements of Scripture by reference to supposed possibilities or impossibilities in spiritual things. The argument they use has essentially that rationalistic character which they themselves would most shrink from; it may be used against the whole doctrine of all spiritual agencies by those whom they would most oppose. When we meet plain Scripture statements by our impossibility of conception, we are putting arms into the hands of the enemy.

Nor have the Scripture texts which are adduced

to support the notion that the regenerate cannot fall, any real weight in this matter. Thus, to take the most decided of them, that from the Epistle of St. John—*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God*[d]—it has been shown by a variety of most trustworthy divines, on grammatical as well as theological grounds, that it does not bear the meaning which is sought to be given it: and we may further observe, that the *seed of God* is simply the Holy Spirit, which is sown in the heart of the sons of God; as long as we continue to be sons of God, as long as that seed, the Spirit, abides in reality and power, so long is the man kept from sin; not of course from those sins which spring from the weakness of our nature, and are therefore inseparable from our state here[e], but from those which spring from wilful rebellion, and end in, or rather are spiritual death. Before Satan can lead a child of the adoption into this sort of iniquity, the will must be alienated from God; in wish he must have sinned, though not, perhaps, in act: and thus is the process described by St. James[f]; first, a man is enticed of his own lust to wish to disobey God, by a rebellious heart of unbelief: the seed of God is blighted, the Holy Spirit is unheard or despised; then lust conceiveth; the desire of sin is matured into resolution and counsel; and then after this cometh forth sin in act and completion. Thus it is true that a regenerate man does

[d] 1 John iii. 9. [e] 1 John i. 8. [f] James i. 13.

not fall from God as long as he submits himself to the Spirit, that is, as long as he continues to be regenerate; but when the seed of God fails in him through the preference of his will for selfish lusts, then does he in the same degree cease to be regenerate, and falls away, not necessarily into, but at least towards actual trespasses and deadly sin; still, as was before observed, his ceasing to be regenerate does not prove that he has never been regenerated. If a man who had been once made alive had no cause to fear spiritual death, there would be no such notions or expressions in Scripture as being again dead in trespasses and sins, or turning to old sins, or falling away after having been made partakers of the Holy Ghost [f].

It may be said that there is danger lest a trust in Baptismal Regeneration should deceive persons as to their spiritual state, and make them slack in the work of their salvation. This may be true; but we do not teach any one to trust to his baptism for his spiritual state; this must be evidenced by the state of his heart and the course of his life: still there may be danger lest some may do so. This is a reason for stating the doctrine clearly, and pointing out in connection with it those other Scripture doctrines which bear on the spiritual life, and which will secure us from the expected danger: it can be no reason for explaining away the doctrine altogether. The self-wisdom of man needs perpetually to be reminded, that theologians and pastors have not to contrive a system of their own, but to use and ad-

[f] Heb. vi. 4.

minister a system which a higher wisdom than theirs has put into their hands.

For if there is danger herein, there is wisdom also; and in this wisdom comfort and blessing; for I cannot but think that no small comfort and blessing is missed by those who are unable to receive the doctrine of the Regeneration of infants in Baptism: surely, for any of us who are impressed with a sense of the responsibility of training and teaching those whom God has given us, who feel how weak are our powers of instructing them properly in spiritual things, it is no small blessing to know, on the pledge and security, as it were, of Christ's ordained Sacrament, that before those infant wills are able to discern between good and evil—before they can fully understand those holy lessons which we would fain impress upon their inmost hearts—before they even know whether there is a Holy Spirit or not—there is a Power within moulding their unformed will, making them understand those mysteries of life and death which can be but faintly expressed in the most earnest and powerful words: quickening their instincts to see good; making them shrink from evil; putting godly sorrow into their hearts when the old man leads them wrong: it is true, that all this is in miniature; the evil is small, the tears soon dried, the self-reproach soon forgotten; but they are not for that any less the work of the Spirit. So again, when we have to cast them on the sea of life, it is no small comfort to us to know, on the security of Christ's ordained Sacrament, that

it is not our own strength or wisdom alone which has been labouring for them, that they may be able to live and die in the faith and fear of Christ, and thus be partakers with us of the resurrection unto everlasting life. We would lay down our lives to save them, we would almost consent for them to be anathema; but in vain; no man may make agreement even for his child's soul. No love, no care can shield them from the snares, the temptations, the example, the ridicule of the evil world. We know that the lessons of faith, hope, charity, if merely impressed upon their memory, or even engrafted on their reason, by our careful teaching alone, will pass away before the fiery darts of the enemy, as the image of heaven in the morning lake before the shadows of a stormy day. What a comfort for us to know, on the security of Christ's ordained sacrament, that if by God's blessing they have laid to heart those things which they have been taught for their souls' health, the religious principles which are within them are not the result of our weak teaching and training, but of the new birth unto righteousness; of the indwelling power of the Spirit, who has impressed and confirmed in their souls those lessons which we ignorantly and weakly, though lovingly, have endeavoured to teach them.

But then it must not be to us a mere doctrine to talk about, or preach about, or argue about, to others; it must be to us an household, heartfelt truth, to guide, comfort, help us in the spiritual

nurture of those souls whom God has intrusted to our care; to guide us really and definitely in our practical views and treatment of them, as having great treasures, though in earthen vessels; causing us to keep in mind that the great secret of spiritual growth, and therefore of continuance in spiritual life, is submission to the Spirit; that as in the man so in the child the Spirit is quenched by following his own will; that to check this dangerous impulse of their own wills, we must work watchfully and humbly with the Spirit; in trying to fill the opening mind with divine things and principles; praying to God and trusting to the Spirit to engraft them spiritually in the soul; to lead them by gentle firmness from self to God; to teach them to find the highest self in Christ; their highest virtue in yielding themselves to grace; to form in them a principle of obedience, not merely of obedience to their parents and masters without, but obedience to the Divine Guide within.

And very far it is from our Church's teaching to make any one contented with his spiritual state or progress, because he believes that he was born again in Baptism. Our Church teaches us to seek for and to pray for *daily renewal;* continual mortification of the flesh; daily increasing submission to the Spirit; a daily increasing power of good works; a daily increasing heavenly-mindedness; a daily increasing distrust of ourselves and trust in Christ; in short, a daily increase of real, lively, personal religion. Baptismal regeneration does not

imply that a man is now alive because he was alive once, or that nothing more remains to be done. Regeneration is but the beginning to which the rest of our lives here should be conformable. Even after the new birth in Baptism we are taught that we have yet to put on the new man; to pass by the successive stages of spiritual growth from spiritual childhood to spiritual manhood. And for this our spiritual manhood all the several instruments of the Spirit are in their proper degree and office necessary; the Word, the ministrations and teaching of the Church, the Holy Communion, in short, all those things which God has ordained as means towards the development of our spiritual life. Even after Baptism we may be said to be continually begotten of the word, inasmuch as in those who are alive in Christ, the word, which is a mere dead letter to those who are dead, continually produces fresh stages of growth—spiritual thoughts, feelings, desires. All these are so far from being superseded by Baptismal Regeneration, that they belong to it as its proper results, lacking which, it is as something which has passed away without leaving any trace behind.

And as Baptismal Regeneration in no way supersedes personal religion or spiritual growth, or the other means of grace according to the nature and power of each, so neither is it opposed to conversion. This undoubtedly has a definite place and office assigned to it by Scripture; but we may not extend this place and office beyond its scriptural limits. To those in whom, by God's blessing, their

Baptismal Regeneration has brought forth its proper results, there is no need of conversion, except in the sense of that daily growth, wherein the most advanced Christian is daily advancing nearer to God, daily turning more and more from earth to Christ; but in the sense in which conversion is often used in modern theology, as the beginning of spiritual life, it is clearly inapplicable to those who have grown up into Christ from the beginning, or even to those who later in life are striving to make their calling and election sure.

But where these fruits of the Spirit are not—where a person who has once received the gift of grace for the work is nevertheless living in careless ignorance or infidelity, or in careless formality, having a name to live even while dead—then there is as much need of conversion as of Baptism itself. If, as children, our own wills lead us instead of the Spirit; if our hearts with their impulses and issues are moulded by the principles, fashions, maxims of men and not by the laws of God, then the precious gift we have received is passing away, and we fall into the old condemnation, and we need conversion. If as men we live merely a natural life, excelling, it may be, in our several paths—being merely philosophers, statesmen, moralists, teachers, merchants, and not Christian philosophers, Christian statesmen, Christian moralists, Christian teachers, Christian merchants—then are we strangers to grace, even while belonging seemingly, through our baptism, to the number of the elect, and living within the dispensations of grace, and we need conversion. It

need hardly be said what is the effect of grosser sin; one might as well say that the thunderbolt kills the tree it strikes, or that the body is dead when the soul has departed from it; and it is impossible not to see that this is the state of a very large proportion of baptized persons.

And yet sometimes such an one *is not dead, but sleepeth;* Christ raises him up by some of those ministrations which are always at work among men, some for one sort, some for another: comprehensive faith does not dogmatize as to the precise way in which life is restored to those who have lost it; we know that the hearts of men are as various as their paths in life, and that God has, in his infinite mercy and wisdom, provided means of restoration for all who desire it. Our Church takes Baptism as it is in Scripture, without limiting or extending or altering either itself or its privileges. We follow Scripture in teaching that Baptism is necessary for all, and that certain spiritual gifts are vouchsafed therein to all who receive that sacrament according to Christ's institution. We follow Scripture in laying down the necessity of conversion for all who are not spiritual; and while we hold out the various means and ministrations which are provided by God as well for the refreshment of the strong as the recovery of the weak, we do not venture to lay down one universal rule for the awakening again unto life. We receive and teach them all as far as they are found in Scripture; or even in the religious experiences of those who having been again dead have again been made alive, as far as

these are confirmed, or at least not contradicted by the revealed truth.

Thus it is not denied that to many persons the new creation unto holiness comes into active being at a later period: nor can there be any doubt but that many, especially among the uneducated classes, have dated their becoming spiritually alive from some definite moment, in which God's mercy has visited them; from some startling warning, or by some sudden and strange accident; sometimes even the visions of a disordered imagination; or some chapter in the Bible; or some soul-stirring discourse which placed things in a new light, and awakened feelings of self-reproach akin to despair; and then, when at the same time Christ and His promises were brought before them, they hastened to Him as men in a shipwreck hasten to the boat which is to save them; old things in that short space of time have so far passed away, that what was their best is now such no longer; what a few hours before they did not know or care for, they now seek and desire; the sins they loved, they now hate and fear; what they hated, they now love. There is nothing contrary to Scripture in this; it is not in all cases mere self-deceit or delusion.

Let us take a case to illustrate what has been said: a man, who has been long living in wilful sin or carelessness, has the promises of God and the sure mercies of Christ, the terrors of the Lord, set before him in words which have the breath of the Spirit, and to which he cannot help listening

in spite of himself: as he listens dark images of wrath, rendered still more striking by the light which is cast on them by the star of mercy shining from afar, throng his soul; the fear of hell awakens him; he ventures to look into himself; and there the busy crowd of sins moving to and fro on their several ministries of evil disclose themselves to him. He sees himself as he is in God's sight, and he cries out in his fear, "Who shall save me?" Christ the sacrifice answers, *Come unto me, all that travail and are heavy laden;* the sweet sense of hope, of gratitude, comes across his soul; he believes that Christ did die to save him; his eyes are opened, and he sees, on the one hand, the bottomless pit, with his own shadow reflected therein, and on the other, his Lord nailed to the cross, and bearing his punishment for him, and he turns to Him: it is as if a leper who, by some strange lack of sense and reason, had long walked among men ignorant and careless of his disease, were suddenly to have his eyes opened, and seeing the Healer by his side, were to say, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Does our Church[a] teach us to doubt what our Saviour's reply would be? Who can doubt, who can teach others to doubt, whether Christ would accept him? who would teach such a one to expect to be rebuffed? Does our Church venture to keep out of sight the Scripture promise, that though his sins be as scarlet, yet shall they be made as white as snow? Far from it: we bless God for His mercy thus shown to him and to

[a] See The Exhortation in the Commination Service.

us. We do not strive so much to turn his eyes to God's past mercies, vouchsafed to him at Baptism, as if he were still alive in them, but to the fresh mercies of spiritual life now vouchsafed to him. But still it must be remembered that such a one is, at the best, in no better or more spiritual state than he would have been, had he made use of God's former mercies in Baptism; than those who have submitted themselves to the Spirit from their infancy; in many, and those not unimportant respects, he is worse[b].

For we must distinguish the pardon of past sins, and the beginnings of spiritual life which are connected therewith, from the restoration of that life to its full functions and powers; that holiness, in short, without which we are told no one can see the Lord. While therefore we hold that in such a conversion the spiritual life is revived, we do not therefore conclude that it is developed to the full stature of the man in Christ. The work is begun, but it is not therefore completed; conversion is not final, any more than Baptismal regeneration; and moreover, the work of spiritual progress is more difficult in the one case than the other. Has his life left no traces behind? has he nothing to do which hitherto he has left undone? nothing to undo which he has done? his heart is in its full strength, with its faculties, passions, active and vigorous; are they renewed by grace? do his feelings, thoughts, desires, ebb and flow with the Spirit? have they thrown off their fleshly leaven? are his

[b] See Whitehall Sermons, p. 101.

energies spiritual? is anger still? covetousness motionless, lusts quenched? does he in his daily life serve the flesh or the Spirit? All this surely makes the development of the spiritual life after a long continuance in sin, even more difficult and uncertain than it is in consequence of our natural corruption. And does the sense of this very corruption of nature make him more vigorous and determined in resisting nature, and using grace? or is it a mere cloke for continuance in sin? In good truth, it is to be feared that the onesided view of conversion, wherein the first moment of turning to God is every thing, leaves many men more unconverted than they were before.

Nor, again, can it be doubted that to many men the work of conversion has been begun and perfected by a more gradual process; by the work of the Spirit in a gradual repentance; by a sorrowful recollection of their baptismal vows and privileges; by the laying aside one sin after another, from the principle of formal obedience to God; by an earnest use of the means of grace. They gradually feel the emotions and energies of the Spirit, and not merely His counsels and promptings; a lively sense of spiritual blessings, the consolations of spiritual peace; and then, after a while, Christ discloses Himself to them as their Saviour, their sacrifice, and welcomes them again to His bosom; so that they find themselves spiritually alive in Him, though not conscious of the exact time, nor even mode in which the Holy Spirit of life first began to work in them.

And they have this advantage over the other sort, in that they have in some degree subdued the old man, and thus done that which the others have yet entirely to do.

Or, again, spiritual life may be rekindled by the working of the Spirit in the personal ministrations of one of God's servants: by his labour in teaching, his remonstrances, entreaties, warnings, example; and it is in this sense that St. Paul speaks of himself as travailing of certain of his converts till Christ be born again in them[a]: though the confusion of metaphor in this passage scarcely allows of its having any direct bearing on the question, beyond the fact, that the personal labours and prayers of the Apostle had in some way or other been effectual in promoting the spiritual life of those for whom he laboured.

Thus do many things combine to produce and keep alive and restore that new man whereof we are speaking; and no one of these excludes the other. Regeneration in Baptism does not exclude what may be called Regeneration in conversion, when it is needed, or the begetting again by the Word, or by the labours of God's servants, in whatever sense these are set forth in Scripture: still less can any of these exclude Baptism from the office which is given to it in Scripture without exception or limitation.

And we must not omit to notice a distinction between the Sacraments and the other means whereby, as we have seen, certain spiritual emotions and

[a] Gal. iv. 19.

energies are produced: and this distinction is suggested by the objection which some make to Baptismal Regeneration—that it is impossible to conceive how water can produce the new birth. It is true, it is beyond our conception; it is the immediate and (so to speak) the arbitrary working of God's Spirit, according to His own good pleasure, and above our conception, attached to this rite by God in Scripture: its being beyond our conception is a feature of its sacramental character. We can tell how the Spirit works upon us in reading the Scriptures, or hearing sermons, for instance; the connection can be traced: by exciting thoughts, hopes, or fears, or some one or other of those feelings whence human action springs: while in the Sacraments the connection between the means used and the result produced cannot be traced; the operation is secret and incomprehensible. The Spirit bloweth where it listeth; we cannot tell whence it cometh, except where God has revealed it to us. And thus the argument brought against these especial means of grace does in reality confirm our belief in them, and point out, though not explain, their distinctive character.

After what has been said, I need not detain you by pointing out at any length that Baptismal Regeneration does not shut out from forgiveness those who have failed of that spiritual growth which is the proper privilege and inheritance of every baptized person: nor how such persons may regain what they have lost or neglected. Let the Scripture speak for itself: *I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven,*

*and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.* This is the first step towards recovery; and it may be taken without hesitation or doubt, so it be taken with childlike humility and confidence. There is no sinner so lost but that he may go in faith and repentance to Christ, and he will be accepted [a]; he will receive of the gift of the Spirit for the work which is before him. Nor is there any delay in his acceptance: if he wishes for Christ, much more does Christ yearn towards him. A penitent sinner may be led by his natural temperament to take vengeance on himself for the injuries formerly done to his soul: but God does not require this of us; such severities and outward acts of self-abasement are not, properly speaking, acts of religion; they are not necessary to acceptance; no long course of penitential discipline, no fountains of tears before Christ will accept us, and restore us to our privileges as seemeth to Him best for us: the prodigal son had not to sit at his father's door in sackcloth and ashes. No long course of good works before Christ will accept us, and give us fresh supplies of His Spirit: the prodigal son had not to work in his father's fields as a hired servant, though he was willing to do so. But, on the other hand, we may not think that a simple act of belief will make us alive again; for we have seen that this belief is not faith, unless the Spirit be in us: where the Spirit is not, there Christ is not; where Christ is not, the notion of our being spiritually alive because we believe in Christ, or because

[a] Whitehall Sermons, "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin," p. 59, sqq.

we have been baptized as infants, or for any other reason whatever, is simply a spiritual delusion, an act of self-deceit. It is in vain for one who hath not Christ to say that he hath life. Wherefore our church scripturally limits Christ's mercy in pardoning and absolving to them who both truly repent and unfeignedly believe.

It is true, that to many persons it would seem waste of time and words to speak so much of the spiritual life, of which so little is visible in comparison with that which is continually before us in the varied affairs of men. It is as if one were to bid us turn our eyes from a mighty river, with cities on its banks and fleets on its waters, to contemplate a rivulet, whose course can hardly be discerned. And hence it is, I fear, little thought of even amongst those to whom life presents itself as a battle-field rather than a playground—as a sphere for serious exertion rather than for self-indulgence. And for this reason we must be careful to keep in mind, not only the difference between the life of the Spirit and the life of the flesh, but between the life of the Spirit and what we may call the life of the reason: I mean, that life which a rational creature would choose in preference to the life of sense: and this all the more, because one is so easily and so often mistaken for the other: because in their outward appearance and acts they resemble one another: and because so few live up even to the rational life, that those who do so are apt to fancy that they have attained their highest perfection. In reality, this rational life is as far below the spiritual

life as the animal life of the uneducated sensualist is below the energetic life of the philosopher, or statesman, or poet. This, indeed, may seem to open a wide field for our highest powers — to promise great and glorious results. The perfect man of ancient philosophy was, in many respects, a noble character, and presents many points for our imitation. But we, as Christians, have a more noble perfection, a more excellent destiny, even in this world. Our highest life is not merely the punctual performance of duties or acts of love, in which, like the rational life, it outwardly consists: but Christ dwelling in us by that His spiritual presence, of which outward duties and acts are but the reflections: it is hid with Christ in God, but it will be seen when He who is our life shall appear. Not that the rational and spiritual life are necessarily opposed or incompatible; it is only when they are separated that the difference between them appears, and the different results which wait upon each become seen: when united, as they ought to be, they work together towards the same end, and to their mutual increase. It is not possible for us, it is not required, it would not be right, that we should neglect the duties of individual and social life; but these, when they are all in all, have but a savour unto death, as the body without the soul: while to those who are spiritually alive, fresh life springs up even from what by itself and in itself is lifeless. There is much in the world, much in our hearts, to make us neglect the spiritual life, to make us lose sight of it, in the formal duties and pursuits

of life: but recollect, no amount of rational development can supply the place of the life of the Spirit; no amount of temporal success can compensate for spiritual death; though each of these is, in its proper degree and place, among the motives which may animate us to labour and perseverance. It is a legitimate object of your ambition, nay, it is part of your spiritual duty, to develope the powers which God has given you: it is a legitimate object of your ambition, that you should hereafter direct the destinies of empires, or be guides and lights among men; that you should have within your reach, and be able to place within the reach of others, the means of self-improvement and recreation; that by your progress in the arts and sciences you should bring to light those blessings which God has prepared for our comfort or use, and which may yet lie hid in the secret treasuries of His natural world. All these, and such as these, may stimulate your exertions, so that you keep in mind the higher object of a Christian's aims, and that which is to sanctify all the rest—that object which, though capable of almost infinite expansion, and placed before us in the Bible under a vast variety of aspects, is yet shortly stated in the Apostle's exhortation—that *speaking the truth in love*, ye *grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

# LECTURE VIII.

Ephesians iv. 16.

*From whom the whole bodly fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

THAT there is nothing fixed in the affairs of men, is an aphorism to which the history of the world, as well as our own experience, bears abundant witness. Various indeed have been the empires, languages, customs, which the stream of time has reflected on its bosom as it has silently glided by and left them behind. The crumbling memorials of past ages, whether in the silent ruins of some deserted city, or in the crowded rooms of our museums; new cities rising up in desert places; new inventions changing the whole tone and destinies of nations; empires rising and falling before our eyes; our languages living and dead; the customs of the childhood and the age of the present generation; all repeat the same tale, there is nothing fixed in the affairs of men.

And yet it is not so universally true as it seems. There is a kingdom, which from its first institution, though ever changing, yet remains unchanged; existing, and ever to exist in some part of the earth or other; with the same powers and constitution, governed by the same laws, preaching the same word, administering the same blessings, performing the same office, in the same Name and by the same authority as when it first sprung into being by the breath of the Spirit at the day of Pentecost.

Nor is this strange when it is remembered, that this kingdom of Christ, the church, is no human institution, depending on the wisdom or skill, or even consent of man. The breath of its life is that which can never leave it, the presence of Christ the Lord. Men indeed can leave it, can withdraw from it their support and protection; but as long as any remain who retain the faith once delivered to the saints as it was delivered to them, so long will the church have a visible place among men; bearing witness by the miracle of her own unchanged existence to her divine original and foundation.

There are those who deny any visible church. "The kingdom of God," they say, "is within you." And so it is; there is a kingdom of God in the soul of every true Christian. There sits God on the throne of our hearts as a king in his palace, as a Deity in his temple. There too by His side is the Son, the Priest, the Sacrifice, the Intercessor; there too the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the Counsellor. There are faith, hope, charity, the princes and

warriors of the kingdom: there are the reason, the desires, the energies of the natural man, as the subjects and ministers hastening in loyal obedience to do their sovereign's will. There is indeed a kingdom within; woe for us if we know it not; but that does not prove that the kingdom without, of which Scripture so often speaks, is a mere dream and unreality, which has imposed upon the whole world from our Saviour's day to the present: it does not disprove that which Scripture tells us, that Christ did institute a visible kingdom, with functions, ministers, sacraments, and has declared it should exist to the end of the world. And if so, it must exist somewhere now; and I need not remind you that, among other unhappy differences, the question as to where the church exists, and what is the nature thereof, holds a very prominent place.

There are those who look upon the visible Church as merely the creation of man; merely composed of a number of men professing, in some shape or other, to be followers of and believers in Christ; and thus that any such assemblage of men can at their own free will and pleasure assume an independent existence as a Church. Others, again, almost worship it, as partaking of the Divine nature, second only to the Divine Persons in the economy of salvation, representing His will to the world in her formularies and doctrines; the mother of all Christians, from whom all life flows to those whom God has given into her bosom; in no way depending for her existence, on those who compose her, but solely on the

unchangeable life of Christ. The former would say, that the Church only exists as made up of individual Christians; the latter, that individual Christians have a spiritual existence only by virtue of their corporate connection with the Church.

We may, I think, discern in a visible Church a twofold character, each part of which is inseparable from the other, so that if either is wanting we have an incorrect idea of the whole. 1. It is outwardly a congregation of men in the same place and time, professing a common faith, joining in the acts of a common worship, and hence varying from generation to generation, according to the changes and chances of this mortal life. And so far the opinion which views it merely as an assemblage of Christians is correct; but this is not all. For 2ndly, it has an abstract, though real, existence as the depositary of God's word and Sacraments, in and by which the Spirit works from hour to hour, and from generation to generation, in the work of carrying out God's will for the salvation of mankind; and hence it is the same in all ages, existing eternally, above and beyond the particular individuals composing it from age to age.

And thus, as in this body there is part changeable and depending on man, part unchangeable and depending on something above man, it follows that a real Church must, in all its unchangeable points, be the same now as it was in Apostolic times. It is true that the whole face of the world is changed; generation after generation, congregation after con-

gregation have passed away; but still in its essential points the Church now on earth is the same as that in which Christ first gave authority to the Apostles. Nor is it the same, merely by resemblance; but it is the same Church, reproduced from day to day in the congregations of successive ages. The ocean and the seas, into which it divides itself, are continually varying from age to age in their material composition; fresh waters are ever pouring in to supply the place of that which from time to time has been drawn up to heaven; and yet this mighty body performs the same functions in the economy of the visible world now, as it has performed from the beginning; it is the same as to the powers and the laws which God has given it. And thus faith can see in the visible Church now existing upon earth the same body as there was eighteen hundred years ago, having the same nature, and performing the same functions, with the exception of those points which arise directly from the necessities of ancient, or the circumstances of modern times. With God these eighteen hundred years are as nothing: hence we have no reason to conclude, that in God's sight there is any greater difference between the true Church of to-day and the Church of the Apostles, than between the Church of to-day and the Church of to-morrow: or than between the Church in the fellowship of which the last of the Apostles died, and the Church in which, on the day after his death, the Christians joined in blessing God for his departure. Whatever was requisite to the essential ex-

istence of the Church then must be requisite now; whatever ordinary powers and privileges the Church had then, she must needs have now; for what is essential in the Church is not affected by the accident of time. Hence, when any body of Christians desire to examine into or advance their claims to be a branch of the original Church of Christ, the safest plan is to inquire whether they would have been taken for such in the Apostolic times; and for this it will be safest to refer to Scripture, though there is not wanting historical evidence of another kind, which might fairly be brought forward in this matter, were it not that I think we find in Scripture itself sufficient indication of the truth.

In Scripture then, we find the Church as the visible embodiment of Christianity, combining into one all individual Christians, with forms, arrangements, government, and acts of worship, ordained by the Apostles according to the will of Christ, by the guidance of His Spirit. It would seem that the first and simplest bond whereby the members were thus bound into one body was congregational; the Christians who found themselves by the accident of place thrown together naturally assembled together for the purposes of common worship, or common safety and comfort. But besides this, they were bound together in this bond of peace by their unity in the Apostles' doctrine. Their prayers, their praises rose up to heaven together; their hearts beat together with common desires and hopes, their souls with common definite faith; their acts of wor-

ship were the common acts of each and all. They were joined together by the strongest of all ties, real, lively religious sympathies on their daily congregations.

But further, there was not merely a congregational or doctrinal, but also a spiritual bond of unity: no congregation had a spiritual existence independent of the whole body. Christians were not members one of another and of the whole only because they worshipped in one place, or because they all thought the same thing; but also because they were by one Spirit baptized into one body, between which and Christ there exists a spiritual, but real, union, spoken of in Scripture in mysterious terms which well suit so great a mystery; in which His presence dwells and His Spirit works in the public acts and ministrations of the whole body, dispensing grace to each one severally as he has need.

And if this be so, we must, I think, conclude that not every accidental assemblage of men, met together to worship, is a church in God's sight; to this must be added identity in doctrine and in ministrations with the Church of the Bible: for as these are the unchangeable elements in the church's existence, they cannot vary from generation to generation, according to the caprices and judgment of men; they must be the same as of old. [And thus the visible church of the present day is not only held together (so to say) by these principles of unity, but also is by them joined to that part of the church which, once visible, has now, by the course of time, been carried out of our sight.

And, of course, the doctrinal bond of unity is preserved and continued by the holding and speaking the truth. A true visible church must be composed of men who, in respect of their scriptural views, would have been recognised by St. Paul or St. James as belonging to the body of Christ in their days. Christian truth must be the same in all ages; no doctrine which was unknown to the inspired apostles can be true now: hence no modern so-called discovery of Scripture doctrine can be true; it bears witness against itself. Nor can the term *church* be applied to any congregations who claim to themselves a spiritual existence by virtue of some doctrinal peculiarity unknown to Christendom in times past, except by a secondary and deceptive use of the word. Thus we cannot suppose that there was in St. Paul's mind any such notion as the church of the Nicolaitans, or of the Gnostics, or of any other of the heretics who disturbed the unity of the early church.

But how was the spiritual unity of the church preserved from generation to generation? As the life of the body is sustained by the continual energies of the living powers, and continued by the continual handing down of these from generation to generation; so was the spiritual life of the body of Christ, as distinguished from the spiritual life of the members, sustained by the perpetual ministrations of the Spirit. Where these ministrations were from time to time carried on according to Christ's institution, there was the Spirit from age to age continued: and where the Spirit was, there was Christ; and where Christ was, there were all bound

together; not only the congregations and individuals of the existing generation, but also the church of one age to the church of all the ages which had preceded it, up to its very earliest days.]

But this unity of the whole does not destroy the individuality either of congregations or persons; each member of the church has an individual existence by his own personal faith and holiness: and it was a natural consequence of the rapid increase of the disciples, and the preaching of the Gospel in various parts, that this one church should comprehend a number of congregations, the members of which were bound together as well by their common belief and common worship, as by their relations to the other churches, and to the whole body of which Christ was Head.

When we examine into the gradual division of Christendom into national or local churches, we shall, I think, recognise the providential wisdom of God in giving a spiritual character to even earthly bonds of union. Wherever men were already bound together by common country, common language, or laws, there arose national churches; each differing possibly from the rest in some accidental points, but identical with them in its essence; and this not only by a common profession of Christianity, but by a common possession of the essentials of Christian verity—the same views of God in heaven, and Christ on earth, of man's calling, duties, destinies—and by common relations to the whole body. And where, again, in any nation local subdivisions had created fresh centres of union,

there arose too diocesan or parochial churches, differing from the national church in the accident of place, but agreeing with it in all else. So that the several churches scattered over the world, though many, were still one: there was but one church in the same place, but one church in the same nation, but one church in the whole world.

And as we have seen that the church of the present day must be the same as that of the apostles, that would seem to be a perfect church, in which these elements of unity are combined — the faith and holiness of the individual members—the possession of the faith of the saints—and the ministrations of the word and sacraments as ordained by Christ at the first. But still these may exist separately; and as far as any of them do exist, so far does the body partake of the character and hold the position of a branch of the true church. The apostolic ministrations may survive in their original integrity, and yet there may be errors of doctrine and practice; or there may be true doctrine, and yet, for some reason or other, the public acts and ministrations may differ in some essential points from those in which Christ's Spirit worked at first: and for such as these modern theology has invented the term of an *imperfect church*.

Further, as we must distinguish between the congregational, doctrinal, and spiritual character of church unity, so must we not confound the spiritual union of the church to Christ with the spiritual union of each individual to Christ by virtue of His

presence in the soul of each. It does not follow that because a church in its corporate capacity is imperfect, as lacking some one of the requisites for a complete church, that all the members thereof are cut off from Christ. Nor again, because the individual members are as single Christians striving to *work out their salvation with fear and trembling*, can we argue that the body in its corporate capacity is a member of the church catholic. We cannot argue from the completeness or incompleteness of the ministrations in a church that the members thereof are or are not united to Christ; nor yet from the piety or wickedness of individual Christians that the Body is or is not part of the church of Christ: the two points are distinct: and therefore we do not conclude from any one belonging to a body, which is an imperfect church, or no church at all, that therefore he is lost. This depends on the spiritual state of each individual soul in Christ's sight; and though of course the spiritual life and growth of a Christian must be hindered or furthered, as the case may be, by the privileges and teaching of the body to which he belongs, yet his salvation or condemnation is only the accidental result of his belonging or not belonging to the visible body of Christ; except, of course, so far as he is personally responsible for the wilful rejection of any part of God's truth, or any part of what God has ordained by His Spirit.

As for ourselves we cannot be thankful enough to God, who in His infinite mercy planted His

church, and allowed her to exist from age to age, that He has also caused her to shake off the corruptions which a superstitious perversion of, or addition to, Christian truth had thrown round her; that He has led her back to her first love; so that in the spirit of comprehensive faith, which is her essential characteristic, she has been careful to retain each of the three elements of church unity—congregational, doctrinal, and spiritual—after the pattern of early times. Our people join together in the offices of prayer and praise; our acts of worship are performed by the whole congregation, except where, from the nature of the case, or for the sake of decency and order, they are committed to men appointed for that purpose. We can see too, that the unchangeable elements of unity are preserved to us; we are bound together by the doctrinal truth of the gospel, as may be seen by comparing our teaching with the Bible, and by the fact that it agrees with that of the catholic and apostolic church of ancient times. The essential ministrations of this early church have been continued in our church from age to age, overlaid indeed at one time by the inventions of man, but restored to us in their original purity and power.

It is difficult perhaps to point out from Scripture the hindrances to spiritual growth, arising from not being in the fellowship of the visible church; for the simple reason that Scripture does not contemplate such a case as persons who were spiritually alive not being in the visible fellowship of the whole body; but it is impossible not to see in Scripture

that the visible church, with its visible congregations, visible ministrations, visible ordinances, occupies a very prominent place in the scheme of redemption. It is impossible not to gather from Scripture that church fellowship was an important element of the Christian profession, and that many privileges and blessings flow to us thereby, which can ordinarily flow to us in no other way. It is true that the Bible is full of the calling, the position, the privileges, the duties, the hopes of individual Christians; but this does not do away with the texts in which Scripture speaks of the visible church as the body of Christ—the pillar and ground of the truth—the spouse of Christ; whereby we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones—that which He sanctifies by His word and sacraments. Faithful Christians are invariably viewed and addressed in Scripture as belonging to the visible Church; those who were admitted by baptism to the position of Christians are spoken of as being *added to the church* in which the Apostles visibly ministered. When any had plainly lost their spiritual life they were cast out from the same visible fellowship. And the position which the visible church held in apostolic times is curiously recognised by those, who, practically denying the existence of any visible centre of unity, assume to themselves the name and, as far as may be, imitate the functions of that body which they profess to despise. It is for them to consider whether they have not lost the substance by grasping at the shadow.

Nor is it difficult to see, even by the light of human reason, that it is no small blessing and privilege to belong to the fellowship of God's chosen saints of old; to know that we are flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone, not only by the sympathies of faith and hope, but by our having been baptized into the same visible body—by partaking of those same unchangeable and unchanged ministrations with which Christ blessed them at the beginning; to know that we eat of the same spiritual meat, and drink of the same spiritual drink. Surely it must add to our joy and peace, our resolution and patience, when we hear the Church speaking to us out of the far off past the wonderful mercies and providences of God to that body to which we in this our generation belong; to feel that, being in the fellowship of our Church, we may have a double ground of sure hope—our own personal faith and union with Chirst, and our being in the unity of that body which He will one day present to Himself without spot or blemish[a].

It cannot indeed be doubted that there have been and are systems of Christianity in which the Church is put so prominently forward as to obscure Christ on the one side, and the individual Christian on the other; but of this there is no danger as long as we recollect that personal union with Christ by personal faith and holiness is the essence of personal Christianity, the test of personal hope. Our Church insists no less on personal religion than on Church fellow-

[a] See Eph. iv. 27.

ship. Nor do I see why they should be separated—why one should be allowed or supposed to interfere with or supersede the other; it is not so in Scripture: a belief in the privileges and blessings flowing to us from the Church is so far from being incompatible from hindering personal holiness, that this latter is a condition of our really and effectually possessing the former. The text of St. John[b], *If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another*, enters as much into our theological teaching as the text of St. Paul[c], *by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body*, which brings forward the formal and spiritual ministrations of the Church as binding us together and joining us to the Head.

Nor does the Church interfere with the Divine prerogatives; we own but one Head, the Lord Christ—we own but one Priest, the Lord Christ—we own but one Sacrifice, the Lord Christ—we own but one Mediator, the Lord Christ—we own but one infallible Guide, the Holy Spirit of God, speaking to us from the Bible, and from the practice and teaching of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, as the witness and interpreter of the Bible, where such aids are needed.

Nor again does the Church interfere with or supersede the royal Priesthood which true Christians possess as personally united to Christ; by virtue of which we may in our own sinful persons, our own mortal bodies, draw near with boldness and obtain

[b] 1 John i. 7. [c] 1 Cor. xii. 13.

mercy and find help in time of need. The public acts of the Church are not the acts of the clergy for the laity, but of the clergy and laity together; personal acts of worship in which each bears his part, to the increase of the body and the edifying of the whole. There is properly speaking, and in what may be called the technical sense of the word, no priest in the Church save Christ: there is no priestly caste or office on earth; all priesthood is confined to Christ. The minister of our Church does not in his ministerial functions stand as a mediator between God and man to procure peace and pardon. He does not offer a sacrifice for them, when with them he *shews forth the Lord's death till He come.* He does not in the public offices of prayer pray for them as a mediator, but with them and in their name. It is not "I beseech Thee," but "We beseech Thee, O God;" though his private prayers have of course the same intercessory power as those of any other righteous man.

Nor again do these privileges of the whole church, or of individual Christians, do away or destroy the spiritual character or the ministerial office of the clergy; these do not derive their authority and commission from man, except so far as the visible ministrations of man have been from the beginning the appointed channels of grace. They come to us according to Christ's institution, and by His authority, and in His name. They are not indeed ambassadors from man to God, but from God to man. To them is entrusted the stewardship of God's mysteries, the

ministry of reconciliation; the dispensing of those spiritual blessings which are committed to the whole Church, in which they are Christ's ordained messengers and ministers. It is their high privilege to awaken repentance, to engraft faith, to give in Christ's ordinances the grace of the Comforter; in their public and private ministrations so to proclaim Christ's pardon to the penitent according to the needs of each, that he may be able to lay hold of it with faith and hope. It is their privilege to feed His sheep, to preach His word; to warn the impenitent, to strengthen the bruised reed, to raise up them that fall; in short, it is their office and privilege to perform among men those ministerial functions which Christ performed when He came on earth to preach the Gospel, as far as they did not arise from those miraculous and divine powers which He possessed as God; and which, though in part vouchsafed at first to those whom He chose, have now passed away from the Church. High and noble functions and privileges, and which may well excite the zeal, the ambition, the energies of the most gifted of God's creatures. But they may not assume to themselves the divine character or office; nor act as possessing the powers of spiritual life and death; or as independent sources of revelation or of grace; or as being able to open or shut the gates of heaven at their caprice. Woe to the church that is in such a case; woe to the church of which Christ is not the head.

Nor have these ministrations of grace any power to make alive without the personal cooperation of each man in his own soul. It is in vain that confes-

sion of sins is made in the congregation, unless our hearts join therein; it is of no avail that the promises of pardon are proclaimed in our ears by the ambassadors of Christ, unless we lay hold thereof by the energies of faith. It is in vain for us that the prayers or praises of the church are poured forth, unless our desires, and needs, and gratitude ascend in and with them. It is in vain that we are baptized into the body of Christ in His church, and by the ministrations of His minister, unless we grow up into Him in all things. It is in vain that the consecrated elements are presented to us by the minister, unless by faith we receive and in our souls feed upon His spiritual body and blood. It is in vain that our names are written among Christ's disciples, unless they be written also in the book of life. It is in vain that we belong to the visible, unless we be enrolled in the invisible and mystical church.

Nor can submission to one visible head in matters of faith, or even in matters of government, be essential either to church fellowship or to church unity; for it was not so in the catholic and apostolic church. It is true that apparent unity may be produced by such submission; nay, it is even true that, in a certain degree, real unity in matters of faith might arise from it, provided that the judgment of this one visible head, was always in harmony with God's will. But still it would be a result of a human, not of spiritual wisdom. And I need not remind you that no outward unity between the members of any church now existing, can compensate for that disunion from the primitive body of Christ which has resulted from trying the perilous experiment of giving to the

voice of man, the authority of the voice of God; from substituting the judgment of man for the teaching of the Bible.

And though there can, I think, be no doubt that in apostolic times the faith of the individual was in all essential points moulded by and identified with the faith and teaching of the church, yet this does not deprive any man of the right or do away with the duty of studying and interpreting the Scriptures for and to himself, and realising by his own moral and mental powers the divine truth; so that it may be not merely something without, to which he bows his head in submissive silence, but something within, part of his spiritual, his moral, his rational being. He may form his own opinion if he will; to his own Master he will fall or stand. But neither does this liberty of prophesying imply that every man's judgment will lead him right, or that he will not have to answer for every error of faith or practice into which it may lead him. It is for each individual to consider whether private judgment is likely to lead him to truth or error: we know it has led thousands wrong: it has been the parent of much evil: we know that it has led many right: to the exercise of private judgment against the authority of the Church of the time we owe the Reformation. A man has a perfect right to be, if he pleases, his own physician; he will live or die according as the treatment he adopts, and the remedies he uses, are right or wrong; but this does not give that treatment or those remedies the power of restoring health or averting disease; and therefore while our Church

puts the Bible into the hands of every one, and thereby recognises and encourages private judgment, yet it recognises too its correlative responsibilities; wherefore have we at the same time placed before us, from our childhood, those essential points of faith which the primitive Church collected out of Scripture, or to which, where the primitive church is silent, the fathers of our own church were led, we trust, by the Spirit of God; not indeed to supersede private judgment, but to guide it to a right knowledge of the word, and to guard it against the errors of later times by the statement of that definite truth which in God's counsels seems designed to correct the weak inventions or additions of man. Thus true private judgment, so far from looking on church authority as hostile to it, accepts it to strengthen and guide its own faltering steps. I think, indeed, there can be but little doubt to what issue private judgment will, in most cases, lead those who so exercise it as to reject the aid which right reason expects, and which God has mercifully provided; who neither in the voice of the church in which God has placed them, nor in that of the primitive church, nor in the opinions of men whose powers and studies make them competent judges, can find any clue to the meaning of Scripture; who trust to their own superficial view of an expression or a passage or a version to insist upon an opinion or practice which has hitherto been unknown in Christendom: but still if any one in consequence hereof fails of his salvation, it will only be an accident of his failure that private judgment led him astray: the essence

of it will be that he did not understand Scripture aright, and thus missed saving truth. The truth which by God's blessing we teach is not true because the church teaches it, but because the Spirit has revealed it in the Bible; to this the church, in her doctrine and practice, bears witness, and sound private judgment receives her witness as true.

And as there are points in which church authority and private judgment may cooperate, so are there points in which each obtains separately. Individual opinions, or convenience in matters of public form, order, discipline, must be sacrificed to the judgment of the church; while on the other hand a man's private acts of religion or of worship are left to his own discretion as to what may best promote his spiritual welfare. And hence all such matters as fasting, special confession of our sins, receiving personal absolution[d], and the like, are left to the decision of each to do, or to leave undone, as seemeth him best. To insist on such matters as necessary to salvation is as absolutely unscriptural, as it is to pronounce them incompatible with a true and lively faith.

So again with regard to forms: it is perfectly true, that the Spirit giveth life, the letter profiteth nothing; that God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth; that we are not to think to be heard for vain repetitions. But how do forms prevent a person worshipping in spirit and truth? what is there in them to destroy or disparage spirituality? The

[d] Whitehall Sermons, X. "on Times of Fasting," p. 175., and XI. "on Confession and Absolution," p. 195.

Spirit does not work less certainly in baptism because it is administered in the form which our Saviour appointed: the Spirit does not breathe less in our prayers because through the use of forms of prayer we know what we are going to pray for, because the souls of the faithful can pray with one breath, instead of listening to a single voice praying for them. If our forms are lifeless, they are so, not because they are forms, but because the spirit of prayer is dead in the hearts of those who use them. And this spirit of prayer is awakened by the well known words as they fall on our ears and reach our hearts, and our souls are able at once to rise up, as it were, and go along with their brethren's souls in their approaches to the throne of grace. If *all* forms were vain repetitions, then would not our Saviour have taught us to pray in the form of the Lord's Prayer. It is true also that the gift of the Spirit in any sacrament or other rite depends on the state of the souls of those to whom it is offered; but the use of forms does not contradict this. The apostles were to say, *Peace be to this house*[d], as a form of conveying the spiritual blessing of peace. Where the Son of peace was not, the blessing did not work; where the Son of peace was, the house was blessed. The blessing did not come without the form; but neither did the form, by its own virtue, convey the blessing to those who were unfit for it. We can see some uses, at least, of forms in their securing that identity of thought and action in the souls of all Christians which makes the religious acts of all and each more acceptable

[d] Luke x. 5.

and more prevailing; and their reminding us that the blessing in every case is the same, and flows from the same Divine Source, the Head of the Church, without taking its shape or power from the thoughts or the will of those who speak in His name: so far from hiding or diminishing the spiritual element, they are found, when rightly viewed, to illustrate and confirm it.

So, again, those who assert the Church's independence of the temporal power, and those who bind her hand and foot, have each to learn something from the other. It is certain that the church has an existence independent of any earthly power; that the Lord is her Head, and King, and Master, and Guide; that to Him she must look in all things: but for the church to assume a temporal power; to dispute, in things purely temporal and accidental, the civil authority, is contrary to the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. It is true that the apostles, when commanded by the Jewish council to preach no more in that name, answered by the Spirit, *We ought to obey God rather than man;* an answer which every true Christian should sympathise in, and be ready, if need be, to adopt. But suppose the Jewish council had merely commanded the apostles to preach in a particular part of the city, or at a particular hour of the day; can we think that they would have deemed it contrary to obedience to God to be subject in such matters to the higher powers?

There are other points by which I might illustrate

and enforce the comprehensive and definite faith, which I have thus partially and imperfectly brought before you; but the space allotted to these Lectures forbids me to enter upon them. I trust enough has been said to suggest a principle which may be carried out in our personal faith—in our theological studies, as well as our pastoral ministrations; enough to show, that as in the true Church the whole body is fitly joined together by that which every joint supplieth, so in the faith of that Church the several doctrines work effectually together. Apart they are comparatively powerless, or by exaggeration lead to error; together, they have the Spirit, and may hope for the victories of truth. Again, as each fact, or mystery, or precept has its proper place in the Divine economy, so the doctrine which embodies each is meant to have its effect on the believer's soul; so that in these too, the several parts of our nature, quickened and spiritualised, may work together to the edifying and increase of the whole.

It will not, I hope, be deemed foreign to my subject, if I conclude these Lectures by a few words on what seems to me, one at least of the causes why this comprehensive faith has, on the one side or the other, been mutilated of its fair proportions. I mean the lack of self-preparation on the part of those who propose to themselves to seek the office of stewards of the mysteries and interpreters of the word of God. I do not mean merely their moral, (which of course is indispensable,) but likewise their intellectual preparation. A contrast is sometimes drawn between a pious and a learned ministry,

to the disparagement of the latter; and a practical inference is drawn, that as a learned ministry is not always or necessarily pious, that an ignorant ministry is therefore better than a learned one. But why cannot piety and learning be joined? surely each must be more powerful together than either separately. It is true that in apostolic times the lack of worldly position and worldly gifts was compensated by inspiration; the learning which we have to seek was given them directly by God; they were ignorant men no longer. It is true if a man depends on his learning, or acquirements, or gifts, whatever they are, rather than on the Spirit of wisdom and grace, that then his gifts become worse than useless to him; but ignorance is not found to be a specific against self-dependance or spiritual pride. I know nothing in reason, I know nothing in Scripture, which would lead us to suppose that the cultivation of whatever talents we have, in subordination to the Spirit, the possession of whatever acquirements may be within our reach, will shut a man out from the ordinary inspirations of the Holy Ghost, or make his ministrations less acceptable to God, less effectual to the saving of souls. It may be said, that piety is always necessary, learning not so; but this latter statement does not hold altogether good; for surely our having made good use of opportunities already vouchsafed to us, is a Scriptural condition of further gifts and aids. And where we have had opportunities of mental cultivation, then the absence of that cultivation according to our

several talents, is a proof of wasted time and neglected opportunity. And do not suppose that the three years wasted here will easily be compensated by a year's retirement to some fresh place of study, or by reading through a few books on divinity, or even some slight acquaintance with the practical workings of the Gospel, and the practical experiences of individual souls. The pastor's mind, to be able to become what it should be, a spiritual treasure-house, must have its natural powers quickened and informed as well as spiritualised, it must *by reason of use have its senses exercised to discern both good and evil*[e], both truth and error.

Nor need I remind you how often it happens that those, who have thus wasted their time and energies here, have found themselves, when their spiritual calling has brought the Gospel really before them, unable to cope with the manifold and wonderful questions of belief and practice which they have had almost daily to solve for themselves or others; and, unable to realise the faith in its comprehensive and definite character, have betaken themselves to one extreme or the other, or sometimes alternated between both as their temperaments or their spiritual experiences have led them. Their own awakening from spiritual death was sudden; and they have made this sudden conversion the sole and universal condition of spiritual life; or they have been led back by the more gradual ministrations of the Church, and they think that every one must return by the same path. In either

[e] Heb v. 14.

case they cast down the other means of life and grace from the place which the Scripture has assigned them—in either case they think they have solved all their difficulties by adopting a simplicity which is in good truth only simple, as it suits their imperfect knowledge of spiritual things; not simple in the sense of combining in one comprehensive view all that Scripture teaches us as necessary for our souls' health.

Nor does it seem quite clear that Christianity is so simple a matter as it is sometimes represented. In it indeed there are certain central points which involve the rest—which stand out by themselves in their grandeur; as in a distant mountain view our gaze is arrested and engrossed at first at least by the more striking features—and to these we must of course always give the same prominence which they occupy in God's word; but still we may not neglect them in that expanded and detached form in which Scripture likewise presents them to us. Even that simplest Gospel, on which all our teaching is founded, by which we are able to awaken so many to spiritual life, "Christ came to save the world,"—how infinitely is it worked out in Christ's own teaching, and still more by those whom He instructed in the things of the kingdom of God! How much does it imply in its Divine as well as human aspect—man's original state—man's fall—man's natural corruption—the curse under which we lay for the present and the future—God's Justice, Mercy, Love—our need of a Saviour—His predesti-

nated counsels — His predestinating providence — man's free-will and responsibility—Christ's nature and office—His birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, mediation—His office as our Priest of sacrifice and prayer—our salvation from the punishment and release from the power of sin—our own part in the work—the motives of fear, love, gratitude, which should move us thereto—our perpetual conflict with the power of evil—our struggles with ourselves—our need of a sanctifier—the office and power of the Holy Spirit—our new birth in Baptism—our daily begetting by the word—the daily regeneration of the heart—our daily renewal—our spiritual nourishment and growth — the power of prayer — of the Holy Communion—our nourishment by the spiritual body and blood of Christ—the nature and office of the Church—the nature of Christian hope and assurance—individual and personal union with Christ. —How our reason is to be spiritualised, our wills subdued—the relation between faith and good works; —our lives here—our resurrection—the day of account—how we may hope to be accounted righteous therein—Which of these points, and indeed, of many others, can be left out without leaving out a part of Scripture, and thus neglecting something which it behoves us to know and act upon?

And if this acquaintance with the revealed word is no simple or easy matter even for the spiritual nurture of our own souls, how much more complex and difficult must a full knowledge of the Gospel be to those who have to divide the word of truth! to those who

are to train and bring others to the practical knowledge of the Gospel in its bearings on their own souls! For they must not only have a definite and dogmatic acquaintance with saving truth in all its scriptural proportions, but they also require no small knowledge of human nature, in its infinite varieties; and if they are to exercise their ministry profitably they must know how to apply the several truths of Scripture as may suit the spiritual needs of each. We have to present Christ crucified in all the aspects and relations in which He is pourtrayed in Scripture, and yet to bring one or the other more forward according to the soul with which we have to deal. At one time we must hold Him up as the Saviour, at another as the Intercessor, at another as the Judge, at another as the King. The Pharisee who is lost in spiritual pride we have to humble, by showing him how little there is in man's best works to stand the severity of God's judgment. The Publican whose heart is doubting and step faltering, we have to tell that the fruits of the Spirit are the sure tests of faith. To one who rests his hopes on the security of the Elect, we have to point the true nature and limits of that security, and the fact of human responsibility. Another who is ever fearful and weak hearted we have to remind of the predestinate counsels of God, and to give him Scriptural confidence for hoping that God will continue the work He has begun. To the impenitent sinner we have to hold up the terror of the Lord—to the returning sinner His mercies. In one we have to watch the

developing energies of life begun in Baptism—in another the more convulsive throes of conversion—and to guide a third safely through the paths of repentance. At one death-bed we have to rouse and sustain faith, at another we must try to awaken repentance. In short, as many as are the varieties of human temperaments, of human failings, and human circumstances, so manifold is the Pastor's office in applying the Gospel of Christ as Christ Himself would have done it—as the Apostles did do it. We must bring out of our treasures things both new and old; and how can this be, except we be thoroughly instructed in the things of the kingdom of God?

Nor can we hope that our people will be bound together by the acceptance of this comprehensive faith —that the whole counsel of God will take root in our land, unless we have comprehensive teaching, and we cannot have comprehensive teaching, unless and until we have comprehensive learning.

If you, my younger brethren, have at all gone with me in what has been said, it will not be necessary for me to use many words to persuade you that logical quickness and accuracy of thought—clearness of perception—readiness and variety of expression —an acquaintance with human nature — will make you all the more effectual instruments in the hands of that Spirit, by whose strength alone you can be strong; it is your business to cultivate your talents to the utmost: if you do not do so, you may depend upon it that hereafter you will have to leave many a

sinner unconverted, many a death-bed comfortless. Of course it will not be supposed that I mean that mere intellectual cultivation will enable you to do the work. The truths which you will have to teach must sink into your own hearts in their practical reality; your own faith must be comprehensive, definite, real, before you can give comprehensiveness, definiteness, and reality to the faith of others. Nor do I mean that only men of great talents can be labourers in God's vineyard. If you have not great talents, it matters not, so that you honestly improve what you have; then may you hope that whatever your deficiencies, they will be made up by Him, without whom the most eloquent human wisdom is but foolishness and weakness. If the bow be strung, and the arrow fitted to the string, then may we hope that the breath of the Spirit will guide our shafts in power to their mark. But if the bow be unstrung, and the arrows allowed to remain in the quiver, how can we hope that men's souls will fall to us as our prey? If our rude instrument be in tune, then may we hope that even our powerless touch will draw from it most heavenly harmonies, powerful by grace; sounds far more persuasive than those which any master-touch of man can draw from the most perfect instrument of human workmanship. But if the strings hang loosely, and only give out now and then a few chance notes, as they are swung hither and thither by every shifting wind of doctrine, what reason have we to hope that our discord will be changed to angels' songs?

And in good truth it is time that all those who have at heart the welfare of this Church and nation should buckle on their armour; not only against superstition on the one hand, and avowed infidelity on the other, but also against those, who being secretly conscious that they fall short of the truth, would persuade us for the sake of peace, as they say, to betray the trust which God has committed to us, of preserving and spreading His gospel. I say "committed to us," for it is, I think, impossible not to recognise the office which God has designed for us. Our privileges as a nation illustrate our duties as a Church; our privileges as a Church illustrate our duties a nation. God has preserved to us the Apostolic truth of the Bible in all its comprehensiveness, the Apostolic ministrations in all their purity. This teaches us why it is that he has allowed our nation to spread itself to the East and the West, the North and the South, why He gives victory to our arms, and free passage to our commerce, and has blessed us with singular success in the arts of life—that the light of His truth might through us shine forth among men. These blessings to us, as a nation, tell us that we must be doubly careful to preserve the faith once delivered to the saints, in order that the message we are to bear to the end of the world may be His message and not man's. By God's mercy to our Church, our Prayer-book, our teaching, our formal definitions of faith, do truly represent His truth in its comprehensive and definite character as it is in the Bible. No partial view—

no concealment of this part of God's message, or of that, because to human reason they may seem at variance—no faltering voice of doubt whether God has spoken or not, or whether the book in which His voice still speaks to us is true or false—we have a definite Revelation from God, definite in its outline, definite in its details; it is in vain that men try to get rid of the smallest portion of it, or diminish its certainty; it is in vain that the various counterfeits of truth conspire together to destroy her, and to share the empire between them, and each to bear rule in her name—to work, each by itself, her work; God's truth will not bear to be thus treated; she will arise and go forth and seek another people, more truthful, more faithful than we are. We moralise on Tyre, and Babylon, and ancient Rome; we speak of them in our pulpits, and schools, and books, as monuments of God's judgments against abuse of privileges and neglect of duties: but we need not look so far; we have proofs enough, even in our own land, of the judgments which God inflicts on those who conspire against His truth. There is no part of our land where the ruins of some ancient church or abbey do not speak to us the same lesson which Tyre, and Babylon, and Rome speak to the world. We can scarcely tread such spots, even with careless step and glad hearts, and under the glorious sun of a summer day, without finding in them deeper sources of thought and feeling than mere admiration for the present beauty, to which decay has but added

fresh charms, or mere sympathy for what has been and is no more. As we pass along those noble courts where religion once sat enthroned in all the pomp which superstitious art could throw around her—as memory's eye recalls those glorious processions and services wherein men strove to set forth our faith rather in gorgeous splendour than in primitive simplicity—as memory's ear catches the echoes of those soul-stirring anthems of praise and prayer, which once pealed forth year after year, hour after hour, to the glory of that Name, which we worship—not alas! unmixed with other names, to worship which is sin—as we recall that past, and compare it with this present, we cannot but be reminded of the times when our Church, having accepted as her master in matters of faith one visible head, instead of the invisible Head, Christ, shared every superstition and error with which man's foolishness had overlaid God's wisdom; and having thus fallen away from the truth, and slumbering in idle pomp and worldliness, was awakened from her dream by the rough hand of the spoiler whom God sent upon her, using the tyranny of man as the instrument of His wrath, even as upon Jerusalem of old, to lay her low. And of His mercy too, in that He did not utterly make an end, but allowed our fathers to return to their first love, and caused our Church to take root downwards and to bear fruit upwards; and hath given increase to our nation from that day to this. And of our danger too—for surely

if we, as a nation and a Church, again fall away, though in a fashion somewhat contrary to the backslidings of our forefathers—if, having the whole truth of God, we cannot or will not realise, and use, and hand down that truth in its fulness and perfection—if we deny, some one part of God's truth, some another, and thus, as far as gainsayers are concerned, deny all truth—if we fraternise with those who, jealous of the influence which religion exercises on the world, say among themselves, "Come, let us kill her, and then the inheritance will be ours"—who are striving secretly and openly to substitute philosophy for revelation, and self-worship for morality—surely there is danger lest God's wrath be stirred up against us, and ruin overtake us; first as a Church, and then as a nation; there are not wanting those who would be willing and stern instruments of our punishment. And if our short-sightedness should bring this fate upon us—if the churches in which we worship should ever become mere picturesque ruins—if our palaces of piety and learning should be level with the dust—if our cities should return to their former desolation—if our ports should be filled up with the crumbling relics of their former greatness—and what has been once and to others, may well be again and to us—then history will surely moralise on our fall, and holding us up as a proverb and a parable of warning to all nations, will write our Epitaph, "This Church and nation was once blessed above all others—she was false to her trust—she distrusted

God's truth—she disbelieved it—she deserted and betrayed it—lo! her place is desolate!"

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*Passage referred to in foot-note* p. 6.—*Bacon's Works*, vol. ii. p. 510.

"The third occasion of controversies I observe to be, an extreme and unlimited detestation of some former heresy or corruption of the Church, already acknowledged, and convicted. This was the cause that produced the heresy of Arius, grounded especially upon detestation of Gentilism; lest the Christian should seem, by the assertion of the equal Divinity of our Saviour Christ, to approach unto the acknowledgment of more gods than one. The detestation of the heresy of Arius, produced that of Sabellius; who holding for execrable the dissimilitude which Arius pretended in the Trinity, fled so far from him, as he fell upon that other extremity, to deny the distinction of persons; and to say they were but only names of several offices and dispensations. Yea, most of the heresies and schisms of the Church have sprung up by this root. This manner of apprehension doth in some degree possess many in our times. They think it the true touchstone to try what is good and evil, by measuring what is more or less opposite to the institutions of the Church of Rome; be it ceremony, policy or government—yea, be it other institutions of greater weight, that is ever most perfect which is removed most degrees from that Church; and that is ever polluted and blemished which participateth in any appearance with it. This is a subtle and dangerous conceit for men to entertain; apt to delude themselves, more apt to delude the people."

THE END.

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